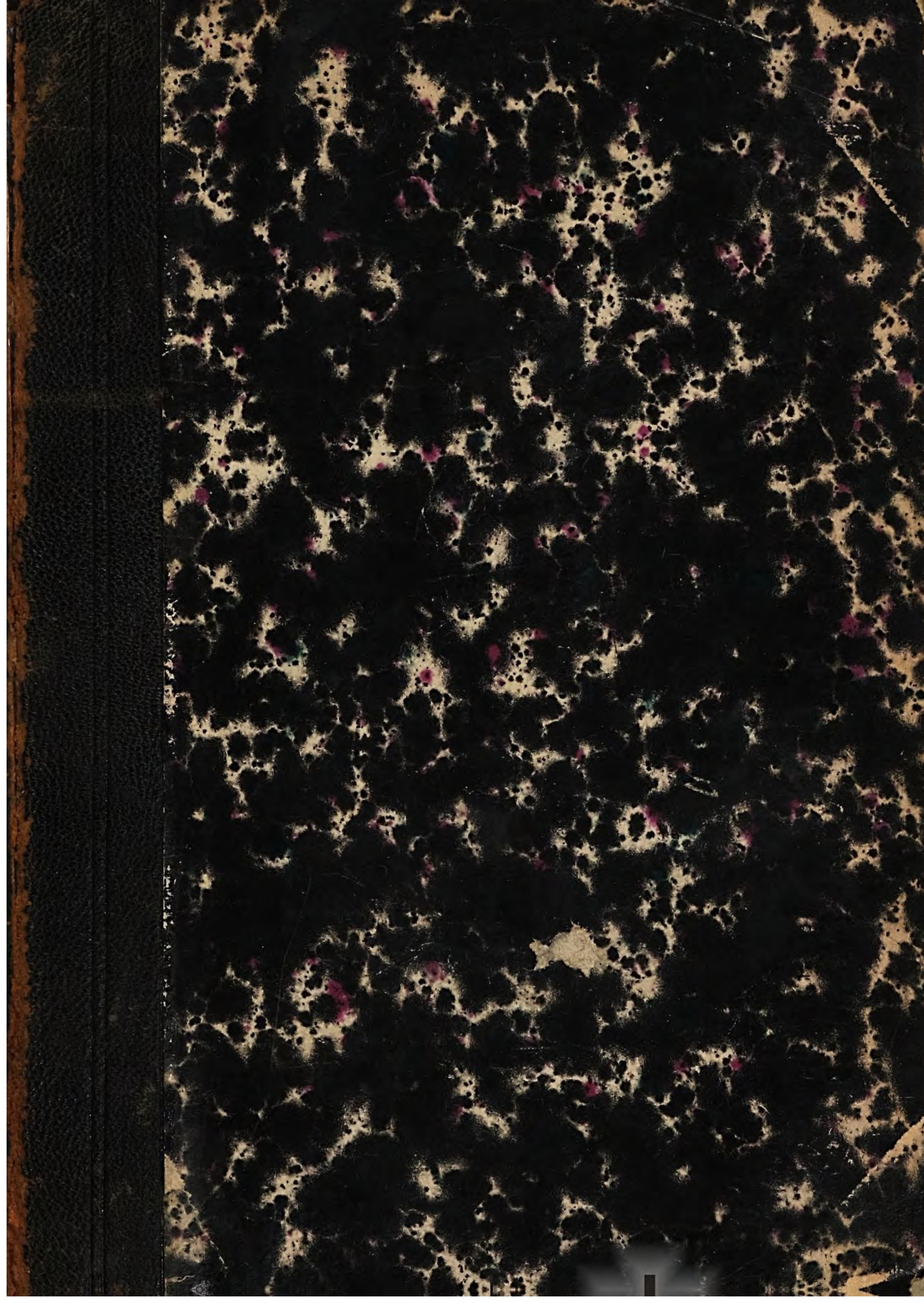




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By the same Author,

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ORTHODOX

BY

DOROTHEA GERARD,

AUTHOR OF "LADY BABY," "RECHA," ETC.

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LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1891.

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ORTHODOX.

CHAPTER I.

I PROPOSE to tell the story of how my friend and comrade, Rudolph von Ortenegg, fell into the hands of the Jews, and the experience he gained therefrom. As the part which I had to play in that story was merely that of a looker-on, I shall clear the way for the chief actors by speaking of myself first. At the time these events took place I was twenty-three years of age (though I felt about fifty), the scion of an old Polish family, and a lieutenant in the Austrian

^ army. I became an Austrian officer because I had to become something, and because I was troubled with no inconveniently exalted ideas of patriotism and nationality. In fact, I was not troubled with exalted ideas of any sort; my sole ambition was to become a "man of the world." By my comrades I was generally described as a "fat, clever boy;" sometimes the adjective "impudent" was added, but that was a mistake for ease of manner, on which I justly prided myself. It is a great inconvenience when your personal appearance is in such flat contradiction to your inner man; but I consoled myself by thinking that, though Nature had handicapped me most cruelly, I had triumphed over Nature. There is no difficulty in being a social success if you are formed like the Apollo Belvedere, but when your build is short and dumpy and you yet contrive to shine in society, there must be a

touch of genius in your composition. The moment that Ortenegg appeared in the regiment I took a fancy to him. I don't know why I did so; perhaps it was that I admired tall men by force of contrast, or perhaps it was that his woful want of experience and his distressing dearth of worldly wisdom excited my keenest pity. This sad state of things was the outcome of circumstances. It was not only that he was a German, which in itself explained a great many things, but the surroundings of his childhood had been such as to depress me by their bare description. He had spent all his life in a sort of mediæval fortress which stood somewhere in the depths of a black pine-forest, and on the verge of a roaring mountain-torrent. His father, the Count *von und zu* Ortenegg, whose only son and heir he was, had long been afflicted with pedigree on the brain; and I imagine that

he very rarely lifted his high-bred nose from out of the parchments and volumes by whose help he was constructing a history of the Orteneggs, beginning somewhere about the time of the flood. Rudolph, therefore, principally enjoyed his own society, varied by that of an old coachman, who taught him to ride, and that of some pious monks who lived in a monastery at the other side of the forest, and who taught him to read and to pray. From all I could gather he seemed to have spent most of his childhood's hours on his pony, riding through the pine-forest to and fro between the castle and the monastery. The monastery must, on the whole, have been the more cheerful place of the two, and the abbot was undoubtedly a jollier man than the pedigree-hunter. The natural result was that a day came on which the Count von und zu Ortenegg was torn out of his ancestral

dreams by the news that his only son was showing symptoms of a monastic vocation. It was the jolly abbot himself who sounded the note of alarm; for he was honest as well as jolly.

Count Ortenegg was thunderstruck. Immersed in his pet researches, he had quite forgotten to notice that his boy had become a man. The idea of having to close the family history with a statement that the line of Orteneggs had ended in a convent cell filled him with pale dismay. Strong measures had to be taken at once. The friends hastily consulted (by letter, for no one else lived in that awful forest) very properly said, "Show him the world;" even the abbot said, "Show him the world," but he said it with a shake of his head, I suppose because he had once seen the world himself. A good deal more was said and done, of course, but the result was that Ortenegg joined our regiment.

The days that I am writing about were still those happy days when no prickly hedge of examinations bristled across the path of the aspirant to an Austrian lieutenantship; in those days we counted many foreigners in our ranks. Our regiment was then stationed at Goratyn—a large Polish country town with a great deal of agreeable society in the neighbourhood, and we were considered to be a rather crack regiment. I suppose that was why we were chosen as the antidote to the monastery.

We knew about Ortenegg's monkish propensities, and I think we were all half-prepared to receive him with civil derision, and to be very funny indeed on the subject of cowls and hair-shirts. But when he appeared he was so different from what we had expected and so supremely unconscious of our little jokes, that their brilliant points recoiled in a somewhat flattened state and

unaccountably fell to the ground. Besides, he had brought some splendid horses with him, and he knew how to ride them, which naturally raised him in our estimation. We all agreed that he was ridiculous, and his notions of life simply laughable; yet, all the time we were rather proud of him, if only as a curious specimen of an aborigine. He was by far the most serious-looking young man I had ever seen. There was something stern and silent—like his own pine-forests—and something forcible and vigorous about him, like the mountain torrents of his home. He had a pair of fine black eyebrows (there had been an Italian princess somewhere in the pedigree, I believe), and he had the eye of an enthusiast, wide open, and with a far-away, luminous gaze. He looked like a young crusader who had just pinned the cross to his breast. I soon began to think that he really might

be made something of. I dreamed of leading him about in society and reaping the reflected glory of his success. By degrees I took him under my protection, and attempted to remodel his views of life; but it was not long before I discovered that the task I had undertaken was about as hopeful as might have been the endeavour to pull up oak trees with my hands and to plant ornamental shrubs in their stead. His innocence was something appalling; it was as bad as that of a school-girl. He was ignorant of the simplest rules of social intercourse; he would not talk unless he had something to say, he would not laugh unless he was amused, nor say thank-you unless he felt grateful, nor admire a thing unless he found it pretty. It was pitiable! Of common practical sense he was completely deficient; in fact, I soon discovered that upon most subjects under the sun he

was a raving idealist. We used to have terrible differences. There was one subject in particular which more than any other brought out his want of practical sense—it was the subject of the Jews in Poland. Almost from the moment of his arrival in Poland, Ortenegg took up this point hotly, for no other reason, that I could discover, than a spirit of contradiction, of which he possessed a fine amount. He used to defend the Jews against us all; he flatly contradicted his Captain on the subject across the supper-table. It was in vain that I warned him: “Don’t you know that it is madness to contradict your Captain?” I said. “A man who has three stars on his collar is *always* in the right *vis à vis* to a man who has only one. Remember that through life.” But he never seemed to remember it.

We used to tell him laughingly that he

would not have made a good monk, after all, for a real proper monk would be more intent on burning Jews than on defending them. "In the name of everything that is mysterious," I would ask in despair, "what makes you espouse the cause of the filthy Hebrew? Are you an Israelite in disguise?"

"No," said Ortenegg, "I knew nothing about Jews, and cared less, until I came here."

"And since you came here their extreme cleanliness and honesty have won your affection?"

"Since I came here their extreme wretchedness and misery have awakened my pity," he would answer. "I don't want to stand by and see anything trampled on, or, at least, I want to know the reason why it is trampled on; and I can't get any. When I ask, 'Why do you abuse them? Why do you cuff and beat them?' you say, 'Because

they are Jews.' You shut them out from every employment you can, and call them rapacious because they grasp at what is open to them. You ill-treat them at every turn, and then call them spiteful because they don't love you. You force them to live in wretched hovels and call them filthy because their houses are not like yours. And when I ask again, why? 'Because they are Jews.' As though 'Jews,' and 'scum,' and 'dust' were just different words for one identical thing."

And then I would patiently attempt to prove that with us in Poland the words really did mean one identical thing; that they were a very venomous scum, a very poisonous dust. "You don't know what you are talking about, Ortenegg," I would say; "you don't know that the gratitude of these *protégés* of yours would be just the proverbial gratitude of the viper. We show

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them no mercy because they would show us none. Do you know why they don't rob you on the road or kill you when they meet you at convenient places? Because there is a law in the land against stealing and killing, and because they don't like prisons and executioners." To this he would retort: "*Some* Jews might rob me, no doubt, and *some* Jews might kill me, but so might some Christians. Do you pretend to say that a Jew, being a Jew, has got no conscience?" "Quite the contrary; I pretend to say that a Jew, being a Jew, has got two consciences, one for his fellow-Jew and one for the Christian. When he sells you mouldy corn at full market price, and when he lends you money at a hundred and fifty per cent., what do you think his conscience is doing all the time? Why, approving highly, of course, for you are the Christian. It is right to cheat you, it is right to rob

you, it is right to break word with you. Here lies the kernel of the matter. It is because of this complete reversal of the idea of right and wrong that the mere existence of the Jews becomes a standing danger to society and to government. You have not been in this country long enough yet to estimate fairly the intensity of that fanatical abhorrence of the baptized which rages like a disease in the veins of every Jew who aspires to the title of orthodox. He must be revenged upon you for being what you are, no matter at what personal or even financial sacrifice, for he hates you more than he loves gold. And he is not even satisfied with hating you; he hates his own species for not hating you enough. The so-called 'Rational' Jew of modern times is a horror to the orthodox bigot, simply because he is not anti-Christian enough, because it sometimes occurs to him that what

would be black dishonesty towards a fellow-Hebrew can scarcely be spotless integrity when practised towards a Christian. If you had come to Goratyn a month earlier you might have learned a good deal by looking on at one of those struggles which periodically break out between the two classes: the Orthodox and the Rational. Occasionally the Rational tell tales upon the Orthodox, and the tales that were told this time were particularly interesting to the members of the Enlisting Commission. Has it ever occurred to you, by-the-by, to wonder why, though there are such thousands of Jews in Poland, there are so few in uniform? Neither the Polish peasant nor the Bohemian labourer are in love with the ranks, but it requires the diabolical cunning of a Jew to slip through the fingers of an Enlisting Commission. In this case the tell-tale in question pointed to a sickly hunch-

back of the name of Eidel Dattelzweig, and it was proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that this same Eidel Dattelzweig had been palmed off on dozens of our Commissions as any number of Jacobs and Moseses and Solomons, unfit for service naturally, since Uhlankas are not made to fit humps. It is one of their favourite dodges; we are aware of it and yet helpless. The cases in which the clue is put into our hands are so rare as to make little difference, for however Rational a Jew may be, it requires something like courage to risk being torn to pieces by a mob of maddened Orthodox. During the eight days that the case was on, the Rational tell-tale lived under a guard of twenty-five soldiers, and had to be escorted to and from the Court of Justice with drawn swords and loaded muskets. It was by the narrowest shave that the authorities succeeded finally in smuggling him out of Goratyn

with a whole skin. Eidel Dattelzweig's hump has naturally lost its market value, just as Eidel Dattelzweig's existence has lost its object for the present; but there will arise other Eidel Dattelzweigs with other humps, or else with club feet, or withered hands, or paralysed knees. The same little game will be played over again, and we shall be as helpless as before. How can it be otherwise? Impossible to keep in your memory a register of all the physiognomies of all the Hebrews of the district; still more impossible to know whether the white-bearded Rabbi, who—his registers by his side—attests with the most solemn of oaths, and with a truly Biblical dignity, that the hunchback before you is Solomon Grünwald and no other, is stating a fact, or committing a perjury which he has committed a hundred times before and is ready to commit a hundred times again—and with a clear con-

science, mind you—with a perfectly clear conscience. We can call him a fanatic, if we like, but we are scarcely justified in calling him a scoundrel. He *honestly* believes that to save an Orthodox believer from serving under a Christian banner is a sacred, a holy act; he is *honestly* convinced that to deceive a Christian authority is a work more pleasing to the Almighty than the sacrifice of a dozen fat oxen. Strictly speaking, he is honest through it all. Man, you must be as blind as a stone wall if you do not see that, under such conditions, a fair battle is out of the question. Ever since the world has begun to go round, poisoned arrows have had the advantage of unpoisoned ones; and, since the constitution of our consciences does not permit the poisoning of our arrows, the one thing left for us is to keep the enemy from getting at his quiver, and that we can only do as long

// Rabbe

Merton
Lionel

as he is on the ground with our foot upon his neck. Do you still want to know why the Polish Jew is trampled on?" But though my words troubled Ortenegg, they did not convince him. I was romancing; I could only be romancing; such a state of things was too incredible to be anything but smiled at; I was prejudiced, &c. I shrugged my shoulders and gave up the case. Of course I knew that time would bring experience, and in the meantime I begged Ortenegg to remember that it was always safer to suspect than to confide. He drew himself up and answered, "Until I have grounds for suspicion I shall certainly not suspect."

"And you are determined to treat them as fellow creatures?" I asked.

"Certainly I am."

"And to pay them what they ask for

their wares? And to believe their word? And to rely upon their promises?"

"Unless I have reason to suppose them dishonest, I shall certainly pay them what they ask for their wares; and unless I have reason to think them untruthful, I shall take their word and count upon their promise. I shall treat them exactly as I treat Christians."

"And they will treat you as *they* treat Christians—exactly," I replied. "Well, may you never know better."

He does know better now, and it is the story of his getting to know better that I have to tell. We had reached the last day but one of the Carnival. Two great balls were to be given in the neighbourhood of Goratyn on these two last evenings of our dancing season. I had procured invitations for Ortenegg, and had persuaded him to

Like // make his first appearance among the aristocracy of the neighbourhood. We started on horseback early in the afternoon. Our way led up a steep hill and past the Jewish burying-ground at the gates, where the tall stones, leaning all aslant, and white with the last snow, looked like a procession of sheeted spectres. Our horses' heads were turned in the direction of the vast beech-forests which on this side crowned the gently swelling ground, while on the other side Goratyn looked upon naked plains, stretching to the Russian frontier, and treeless except for the willow and poplar borders of the few and widely scattered villages. Just outside the town there stood a stone cross, of the Greek shape, with two arms. I never pass it without remembering the unpleasant surprise I felt when once, in a severe winter, I had found six wolves waiting for me behind that cross, and I had

been forced to turn my horse and flee ignominiously down the hill again. As we passed the cross to-day I mentioned the story to Ortenegg. After that we spoke little, for it had begun to snow hard and the wind was piercing. We had got deep into the bare forest when all at once a strange figure, seen indistinctly through the white whirl, seemed to rise from the ground straight in our path. Ortenegg's horse first shied, then plunged. I heard a shriek, and saw something dark and formless struggling on the ground. Next I became aware that Ortenegg had slid from the saddle, and, forcing the horse to one side, was bending over the dark thing. I did not know what to make of it except that it was a "thing." It looked hairy, and I thought I distinguished a pair of horns, yet all the time, from under what seemed to be a hide, a voice was whimpering "Wai,"

and again "Wai," with the most unmistakably Hebrew accent.

"Is it a speaking cow or a horned Jew?" I asked. "Does it bite, Ortenegg?"

Meanwhile the cowhide heaved and parted, the horns dropped back, and the small terrified face of a little Jewish girl stared up at us, distorted into an expression of almost comical alarm. When Ortenegg inquired whether she was hurt, she only repeated in a whine, "Wai, wai! My arms, my legs, my bones! Oh, wai, wai!"

By this time he had helped her to her feet, and we were able to examine our victim more closely. We wondered as we looked, not knowing whether to be more struck by her extreme prettiness or her extreme dirtiness; both were equally marvellous in their way. Her cheeks were as round and soft as peaches, but peaches which have recently rolled in the gutter;

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Refining.

her lips were like damask rose-leaves picked from the mud; her hair, which was not of the usual Hebrew black, but of a bright auburn tint, looked like so much tangled floss-silk; her small hand might have been taken for a piece of ivory carving, considered too precious by its owner to be ever dusted or scrubbed. There was an ink spot on her forehead and a mudstreak on her chin; and as now the tears, mingled perhaps of alarm and pain, began to run down her face, the course which each silvery drop had taken was clearly to be traced, like the mark of a river on a map. Her bright brown eyes alone she had not been able to dim: they flashed from her face like some clear, thrice-polished stone. Clinging, as she now was, to Ortenegg's arm, she looked a very small creature indeed. Probably she was no more than twelve years old.

“So she fell down, did she? And has

broken her arms and legs, has she?" I commenced, addressing her in the third person, as is our custom towards Jews. "And what right has she to be masquerading in a cowhide on the high road? Does she not know that the Carnival is for honest Christian folk, and not for cheating Hebrews? Ortenegg, why do you let her claw your arm? I wouldn't touch her with a pair of tongs."

The small Jewess had been anxiously and cautiously feeling her ankles alternately, then her elbows, then her back, but all the time never losing her hold of the cowhide, a corner of which she kept tightly tucked under her arm. "Wherefore should I be masquerading, *Euer Gnaden*" (literally, "your Grace"), she answered in a shrill but abject whine. "I put the cowhide over me to keep out the snow. It won't spoil its market value," she added quickly.

“And did she steal the hide that she must needs take it home in such a hurry?” I asked, for I am always suspicious in these cases. The small Jewess raised her eyes to heaven. “*Gott und die Welt!* One whole florin and twenty kreutzers it cost me, and they at Biesciscow wanting it to be eighty! But it is a sound hide, and Euer Gnaden can have it for one florin and seventy if he desires.”

“And why does she buy her cowhides at Biesciscow?” I inquired, disregarding this offer. “Are there no cows at Goratyn, and have they no hides?”

“Surely they have hides, Euer Gnaden, but they are at least ten kreutzers dearer. They are slaughtering many oxen at Biesciscow to-day for the supper at the great balls; and it is a week ago that I said to myself: Surchen Marmorstein, the Carnival is the time, and Biesciscow is the place to

make a good *Geschäft* (bargain) with a hide. But if Euer Gnaden will give me only a florin sixty-five."

"And does she expect me to believe, Surchen Marmorstein, that she has walked to Biesciscow for the sake of a dirty cowhide?"

At this she began to whimper again, jerking out a tearful account of her misfortunes. Oh no, she swore by the grave of several ancestresses that she never would have dared to walk to Biesciscow; no, not even for such a cowhide as this one was; she was too much afraid of the wolves and the snow and the darkness. It all came along of Isaac Sternfeld getting a sore finger with the frost and not being able to play the fiddle at the great Biesciscow ball, as he had been engaged to do. If it had not been for that, Aron Nelken, who had taken her to Biesciscow in his cart, would

have given her a return seat as well; but, of course, when Aron Nelken was offered the chance of playing the fiddle in the place of Isaac with the sore finger, it was natural that Aron should take that chance; she could not think evil of him on that account; but, hi, hi! she was very frightened and very tired, only she was glad she had made a good bargain with the hide. But it was a long way to go, hi, hi, hoo, hoo! The narrative ended in a burst of genuine and clamorous self-pity.

“Poor child!” said Ortenegg. “What can we do for her?”

“The only thing I can suggest,” I returned, “is that you should turn your horse’s head and give her an escort home.” It was meant as the most biting sarcasm, of course, but, to my horror and amazement, Ortenegg turned gravely to Surchen Marmorstein and asked: “You would not be

frightened if I went home with you?" She stared incredulously. "Ortenegg!" I cried dumbfounded, "I was only joking, you know." He answered that possibly I was joking, but that he was not. He inquired whether, after having knocked down and lamed this unlucky child, I could reconcile it with my conscience to let her limp home alone. I thought I could perfectly. "Besides," I added, "she is not lame at all. That vermin never comes to harm."

At this point Surchen Marmorstein, who seemed rather to have forgotten about her ankles, uttered a sharp groan, and made another clutch at Ortenegg's arm. It had only just dawned upon her that he was serious; and no doubt the little villain was a great deal too genuinely afraid of the terrors of the road to lose this unexpected chance of an escort.

"There!" he said, looking at me scath-

ingly. "She is just as likely as not to faint by the way, and if the wolves chased her as you say they chased you——"

"There would be a Jewess the less in the world," I answered with equanimity. "Come along, Ortenegg, don't be a fool. Are you bent upon making me miss the first quadrille?" But I could see by the set of his black eyebrows that my words were wasted breath. In vain I drew dazzling pictures of the ball-room; in vain I reminded him that the champagne was reported to be real Cliquot. In my despair I think I must have become almost pathetic. At last, when upon my mind, as well as upon the mind of Surchen Marmorstein, it had been borne in that Ortenegg was not joking, I took refuge in sarcasm. "How will you do it?" I asked, looking on with grim interest. "Are you going to take her up behind you? It would be unkind to let

her walk, you know." Ortenegg apparently had no objection to the arrangement, but Surchen most decidedly had. *Gott und die Welt!* she never could think of getting on to that prancing animal's back! Her foot was just well enough to let her limp along, and just bad enough to make the protection of the rider's presence necessary. "Good-bye, madman," I said sadly at the last. "I wash my hands of you for the present. If you turn up in the ball-room towards daylight I intend to cut you." With that we parted. I rode to Biesciscow alone, and Ortenegg, with the Jewess by his side, turned back towards the town which he had left but an hour ago.

CHAPTER II.

ORTENEGG never appeared in the ball-room. It was only some days later that I heard all about his experiences of that evening. I got the account from him, or rather I drew it from him bit by bit.

At first Surchen Marmorstein limped along silently by the side of the road, wrapped in her cowhide. Presently she forgot to limp and began to talk, and Ortenegg discovered that he was being put through a lively course of cross-examination. His name, his age, his relations, his tastes, were all in turn explored, most particularly his tastes. As a result the cowhide was offered him once more, at another slight reduction of price. This being declined,

Surchen became pensive, and fell to watching the chestnut stepping slowly through the snow. "If Euer Gnaden wished for another horse of the same colour," she suggested, "Aron Nelken has just such a one. Shall I tell Aron Nelken to bring the horse, Euer Gnaden?"

"Thanks," said Ortenegg courteously; "my stables are full."

Surchen's eyes wandered from the horse to Ortenegg's military cap. "The snow is not good for the gold cord, is it, Euer Gnaden? Lämmle Blauweiss pays very well for gold cording that is not new; he pays better than Simon Alterfried. Is it with Simon Alterfried that Euer Gnaden has dealt?"

"I have dealt with nobody," said Ortenegg, in some bewilderment.

"Ah no, Euer Gnaden has not worn the Lancer uniform long enough. So Simon

Alterfried has not got the *Kundschaft*" (custom), she added hopefully. "He gives quite a florin less than Lämmle Blauweiss for a cloak."

"I have no cloaks to sell."

At this juncture Surchen sighed. I could have told Ortenegg exactly what that sigh meant; it meant that he was not proving himself a hopeful subject for a *Geschäft*. But, of course, she was not beaten; she made various other attempts. Music having been mentioned, *à propos* of Isaac Sternfeld and his sore finger, Surchen confided to Ortenegg that she knew the owner of a genuine Cremona violin, and it was just possible that he might be induced to part with it; then—her thoughts darting from one subject connected with the ball to another—she inquired the name of Ortenegg's wine-merchant, and offered to put him in the way of getting champagne at a nominal

price. But here, too, fate was against her; Ortenegg did not play the fiddle, and he did not care for champagne. "And yet Euer Gnaden goes to balls, where it is all fiddling and champagne, they tell me. If it is not the music or the wine that takes him there, then it must be the ladies' dresses—or their faces? Does Euer Gnaden like beautiful faces?"

Ortenegg owned to me that the question startled him, though it was put with the most ingenuous simplicity. In the first place, he was not at all sure that he had ever seen a beautiful face.

"Euer Gnaden would have seen many beautiful faces if he had gone to the ball to-night," said Surchen; then for some minutes she hopped along in silence. All at once she drew a little nearer to the horse's side: "Have you seen Salome?" she asked, looking up into his face.

“No; who is Salome?”

The little Jewess had already darted back to the side of the road. “I have a sister called Salome,” she said, in a completely indifferent voice. “Oh, hoo, how cold it is!” and pulling her cowhide more closely about her she retreated into its shade and spoke no more.

When they reached the bottom of the hill and all danger of wolves was past, Ortenegg began to wonder whether he might not get to the ball after all. But he now perceived that Surchen was limping again more heavily: shuffling painfully along a little in advance and looking back over her shoulder towards him, evidently expecting him to follow. So Ortenegg said nothing and rode on. He had never been at a ball before, so perhaps the sacrifice of giving it up was not very great; and yet I know perfectly well that he had had his

curiosity. It was just like him not to want to abandon this piece of knight-errantry which he had undertaken. The big market-place to which Surchen led the way was deserted. The wind had swept it clear of loiterers, and the lights were beginning to burn in the windows. Down one side of this *Platz* there was a row of tumble-down arcades, built of brick and patched with plaster. The Jewish shopkeepers whose shops opened out here generally made use of the arcades for the display of their goods, and on dry days the brick columns were made gay with striped shawls, printed handkerchiefs, and strings of beads, or else festively garlanded with wreaths of dried figs and bunches of tallow candles. But to-day the wares of all sorts had been taken under cover, and the snow had drifted deep into the corners and high up against the sides of the columns. When they had

skirted the market-place, Surchen, always looking back for Ortenegg to follow, began to thread a maze of narrow streets. There was a perfect network of them in this direction, for Goratyn was a big place in its way, though that way was a very small one.

"It is not very far, not very far," she kept saying; "if only I can reach the door." At last she said, "This is the street." And now Ortenegg, whose patience had been gradually oozing away, made up his mind to turn, for was she not within sight of her own door? And it struck him that if he did not make haste he might find a snow-drift between him and Biesciscow, for the weather was growing wilder every minute. But just then, by some strange contrivance of fate, he caught sight of a man he knew, one of the few non-dancing officers of the regiment, who was taking this short cut from the barracks to the centre of the

town. This man, catching sight of Ortenegg, looked surprised, and glancing from him to the ragged and disreputable Jewish child in advance, began to look amused. Ortenegg at once changed his mind; he would not resign his charge in the face of that amusement. He pushed on a little closer to Surchen and spoke to her audibly, so that there should be no mistake about the connection between them.

Presently Surchen limped through a covered archway and into a narrow courtyard, and here she stood still at last, before a tall, shallow, mean-looking house. Several doors, surmounted by signboards, opened on to the yard. On one of the signboards was painted: *Berisch Marmorstein, Dealer in Bones and Skins*. Another bore the inscription: *David Marmorstein, Ladies' Tailor*. On a third were the words, *Lämmle Blauweiss, Merchant of Clothes*.

“So you are safe at home,” said Ortenegg, looking round him. “But what is the matter?” for Surchen was leaning against the wall, and with her hand to her side was making a grimace of pain.

“Wai!” she whimpered. “I feel bad, oh so bad! I can never get up the stairs!”

“Shall I call somebody—some of your relations?”

“No, no,” she cried; “they are all busy—they could not hear.”

That being the case, thought Ortenegg, as he looked at her drooping figure, there was nothing for it but to dismount. It seemed almost as though at this eleventh hour she was going to faint after all. He made his horse fast to a post in the ground, and turned to Surchen. “This way,” she said, and clinging to his arm, she pointed to the door that was headed “*Berisch Marmor-*

stein." Ortenegg found himself stumbling down some broken steps into a sort of cellar. A curious and very disagreeable smell greeted his nostrils; the wall seemed thickly hung with dark objects that rustled like parchment as his shoulder brushed against them; he trod upon something that crunched beneath his foot like a bone; Surchen paused for an instant to throw her cowhide into a corner; then, peering about her in the half-darkness, she pressed on. "A little higher up," she said, "a little higher up;" and Ortenegg, rather to his surprise, felt himself hurried through another door and up a wooden staircase. It was she who was dragging him now, not he supporting her. They passed by several landings and many doors, but the little Jewess never paused till they had got to what seemed to be garret-height. There she stood still, breathless, before a half-open door; a broad

band of yellow light fell across the landing. "Into the room," she said, "just into the room; I feel so bad." Then with one hand she pushed wide the door, and, she being on his arm, he had perforce to enter. He found himself in a sort of garret—a large and wretchedly-furnished attic-room with a sloping ceiling and small sky-windows. There were three people in the room—two men in long kaftans, and a woman. Both the men had their backs to the door, while the young girl stood with her face turned towards it. She was dressed in a rich and dazzling evening dress. She stood quite still, with her arms hanging by her sides, in the passive attitude of a lay-figure. Her hair, which was of a deep red-gold colour, was pinned up carelessly at the back of her head, as though to be out of the way. The dress she wore was silky in texture and creamy in colour, and there was some gold

lace, or braid, or trimming, about it which seemed to flash when her hair flashed in the lamp-light; at least so Ortenegg said. He did not tell me then that he thought her beautiful, but I formed my own conclusions. It was only some time later that I saw her and could judge for myself.

The attic, being large, was dark in the far-off corners; all the light in the room was turned upon the woman, or rather upon the satin dress. Both men were busied about her—one of them knelt on the floor, putting pins into the folds of the satin; the other bending low, held forward an oil-lamp to light the worker. Two tallow dips stuck into bottles were placed on the corner of a wooden table in such a position as to throw more light on the figure.

“That is Salome,” said Surchen; and at the sound of her voice the two men turned round. The one who knelt on the floor

was young, and his hair, side-ringlets, and beard were of the brightest carrotty-red. The other man was old. As he straightened himself Ortenegg saw that he was of a tall and stately presence, with a white beard that flowed to his waistband. They looked at him in stupefaction, then at Surchen, then at each other. Ortenegg's impression was that they were angry at his intrusion.

Before he could explain Surchen sprang towards the old man and cried: "I got it cheap—I got it a bargain!" He answered her sharply, something that Ortenegg could not understand, for it was in Hebrew; but when Surchen repeated, "I got it cheap—I got it very cheap, Väterle," there came a softening to his expression, and an apparent struggle between displeasure and approval.

The red-haired Jew took half a dozen pins out of his mouth, and inquired with

agitation whether the gracious gentleman had come with any message about the ball-dress? As he could see for himself, it was all but ready; he knew that it ought to have been delivered two hours ago, but the work had been so pressing; there were only a few more stitches—the last folds to drape——

“Wai!” cried Surchen, clasping her hands above her head, “the dress will never get to Biesciscow to-night; there will be three foot of snow on the roads. Listen to the wind!” For now the wind was roaring over the roof and pelting the attic windows with snow. “The gentleman has not come with a message; he came because I fell, and my foot was bad.”

“And fifteen florins it was to have been!” groaned the young Jew, rocking his body as though in physical pain; “they will cut down the bill if the dress is late!” and he

fell desperately to putting more pins into the satin, while Surchen, threading a needle, knelt down on the floor beside him.

“The gentleman has been very gracious to come home with my daughter,” said the old Jew, bowing low and majestically, with the dirty oil-lamp in his hand; but, in spite of his suavity, Ortenegg could not help feeling that the old Jew was put out about something; there was an angry colour in his cheeks, and he seemed endeavouring to place himself so that Ortenegg should see as little as possible of the girl in the white dress, and to hold the lamp in such a position that it left her face in shadow. All this time she had not moved, but stood with her arms straight by her sides. She seemed absolutely and entirely indifferent to Ortenegg’s presence; almost unaware of it. If it had not been that he had met her eyes as he entered, he might almost have taken her

for a real lay-figure, so immovable did she stand. Her immobility and her silence seemed to have got upon his nerves somehow; he wondered whether he could not break it; and, therefore, instead of leaving the attic where clearly there was nothing further for him to do, he lingered a minute longer to explain how Surchen had been knocked over in trying to cross the road. Both the old Jew and the young Jew made exclamations of interest, and seemed moved and startled by Surchen's adventure, but the other girl's expression never changed; she might have been stone-deaf for any motion that appeared on her face. Ortenegg became unreasonably anxious for her to move or speak. The fact, of course, was that his vanity was piqued by her statuesque indifference, for even young men brought up in monasteries do not enjoy being treated as empty air by handsome Jewesses.

“It must be very tiring to stand still so long,” he blurted out at last, looking straight at the young Jewess; but it was the old Jew who answered hastily, “She is used to it; Salome is used to it.” Salome herself stood as calmly indifferent as before, and never for one second looked towards him. Then Ortenegg thought it time to beat a retreat, but just as he turned to the door it burst open, and another Jew, of a stumpy build and with a large head thickly thatched with tight black curls, rushed in in frantic haste, his kaftan flying, his slippers clapping on his heels. The two workers looked round with a start. “Oh, it is Lämmle Blauweiss,” they said, as they caught sight of him. Judging from the appearance of the man, Ortenegg thought that he had burst in with the news of some disaster, an earthquake, or, at the very least, an explosion; but he said nothing, only dashed through the room and dis-

appeared through a door at the further end, where he rummaged about for a minute or two in what appeared to be a well-stocked lumber-room. When he reappeared he had a birdcage in one hand and a pewter pot in the other, a faded silk dressing-gown flung over one shoulder, and a moth-eaten fur cloak tucked under his arm.

“Come and hold another light for us, Lämmle Blauweiss,” called out the red-haired Jew, as the other came across the room, staggering under his miscellaneous burden.

“*Keine Zeit, keine Zeit* (no time, no time)!” answered Lämmle Blauweiss, making for the door; and he disappeared again as he had come.

“Lämmle Blauweiss never has time,” sighed the red-haired Jew, apparently aggrieved.

"He makes his time into money," replied Surchen, sharply and shortly.

Ortenegg thought the appearance of the wild and hurried Lämmle Blauweiss rather an amusing but quite a trivial incident; later on he remembered it well.

When he got to the first landing there were steps behind him, and Surchen overtook him; her foot seemed to be quite recovered.

"Are you glad you have seen Salome?" she asked breathlessly.

Ortenegg looked at her, startled. "And Salome is your sister?"

"Salome is my sister, and you should be very glad that you have seen her, for very few people have seen her; they keep her so hidden. Västerle is so frightened of the officers; I wonder why?" said Surchen, staring up wide-eyed into Ortenegg's face. Then she paused, as though she were waiting for

him to say something, but he said nothing and began descending the stairs. She was after him in a moment. "Do you know," she said in a whisper, "there was an officer once who had heard about Salome, and he wanted to see her. So he promised to give me a florin if I helped him; and I did. I put him behind a wall and took Salome past, once, twice, several times, walking up and down, and he found her so handsome that he gave me *two* florins instead of one." Surchen broke off again and looked at Ortenegg.

"And did he see her again?" asked Ortenegg.

"No, he never saw her again, for Västerle found it out, and it is since then that they keep her so much at home. Is Euer Gnaden glad to have seen Salome? As glad as that officer who gave me the two florins?" The tone was insinuating now, and with

dawning disgust Ortenegg began to read her drift.

"No," he said shortly, as he turned from this lovely but repulsive child, "I am not glad, and I shall not give you two florins for having shown me your sister Salome;" and, brushing past her, he left her alone on the staircase.

When he got to the street the snow was drifting so high that all thought of reaching Biesciscow that night had to be given up.

"But you might have come for the second ball," I objected. "A sledge could have got through by the next night."

"I suppose it might," said Ortenegg, "but I forgot all about the second ball."

"Oh," I said, and lapsed into silence for a time. "Tell me," I presently began, "how many women have you seen in your life? State to me in plain arithmetical figures the

exact number of women that you had set eyes upon before you came to Goratyn."

"Women?" he repeated, staring. "Oh, of course I have seen plenty of women. There was the housekeeper at Schloss Ortenegg——"

"Describe the housekeeper at Schloss Ortenegg."

"Well, she was rather deaf, poor body, and very lame."

"That will do. Go on to another woman."

"Then there was Trudel, at the monastery, the wife of the convent gardener."

"What was Trudel like?"

"Rather like a turkey-cock. They say she beats her grandchildren, and she can't speak very plainly because of having lost some of her front——"

"All right," I interrupted, "that's quite enough about Trudel. Was everybody deaf

or a grandmother in that fearful forest of yours? Were there no women under fifty?"

"Oh, yes, there was Fannerl, the coachman's niece. She was a very handy girl, considering how fat she was for her age, but my father would never let her inside the house because of her squint, which made him nervous."

"And these are all the women you have seen?"

"Yes," said Ortenegg, "I think that is about all."

"In that case," I said to myself, as I drew a breath of relief, "perhaps Salome is not so very beautiful after all."

CHAPTER III.

BUT she *was* beautiful. Perhaps she was not quite so conspicuously handsome as Rachel Kazles, the daughter of the hotel-keeper on the *Platz*, or as Sara Silberling, the grocer's niece, or as half a dozen others—for good-looking Jewesses were not scarce at Goratyn—but, all the same, Salome was beautiful. I found this out before I saw her, for, upon more closely questioning my memory, I became aware that I had certainly heard the name of Salome Marmorstein mentioned as that of a woman worth seeing. The reason why so little was heard of her was partly because she was kept so jealously concealed, and partly because she was reported unapproachable. Also, per-

haps, she did not hit off the general fancy as precisely as did Rebecca or Sara, for I believe that red-haired Jewesses, inasmuch as they sin against tradition, are an acquired taste. From Ortenegg's description I had already gathered that this family belonged to the race of the so-called "red Jews," a certain number of whom are to be found in Poland. In this race the colour of hair and complexion remains obstinately fixed for generations at a time, notwithstanding the introduction of other strains. Salome's beauty was certainly of a more uncommon type than that of any of the raven-locked Jewish beauties of the place. Her pure red-gold hair grew thick and low upon an ivory brow; in the grace of her exquisite figure and the pose of her proud head there was something at once severely classical and haughtily indolent.

race

But I am forestalling. It was not till

some weeks after the ending of the Carnival that I saw Salome. If I had still entertained any hopes of her not turning out so very good-looking after all, they were soon dispelled by Ortenegg's conduct. Scarcely had Lent begun than I noticed with concern the peculiar shape which his conversation was taking. Once or twice before this he had let drop remarks which showed me that, though he had come here to please his father, he had not yet abandoned the idea of taking the cowl some day, but it was only now that he suddenly became expansive on the point—expansive and, for him, almost loquacious. His thoughts, it seemed, had suddenly turned to missionary work.

“Among the Chinese or the Hottentots?” I asked.

“No,” answered Ortenegg, “among the Jews,”

While I suspiciously eyed him, he then went on to draw me what he called a "lamentable picture" of the black gulf of ignorance in which the Hebrews of this country were floundering as in a mire.

"It is pitiable!" he cried. "I have been informing myself of their practices, their faith, and it is terribly pitiable. This narrow superstition, these rigid beliefs, this religion of terror which drives them to cling to the letter of the law and to leave the spirit dead. Why, they are like children, Zultowski—like great nursery babies. Did you hear of the woman who was excluded from the Synagogue because she had boiled milk in the meat-vessel, or cooked meat in the milk-pan, or some crime of the sort? Do you know that they get rid of their sins by emptying their pockets into the water or shaking their clothes in the wind?"

By this time he was walking up and

down my room with his eyes on fire, and what I used to call the "crusader look" upon his face.

"Your interest in the Jews seems to be going *crescendo*," I observed.

He did not pay the slightest attention.

"And then, what makes them wear those hideous wigs?" he burst out anew, in a tone almost of exasperation. "Is it a fact that every Jewess has to cut off her hair when she marries?"

That Ortenegg should feel exasperated by the sight of a woman's wig was in itself the symptom of a change in him. It showed that he had been observing women more carefully; it betrayed that he had probably been making comparisons.

"Yes," I explained, "it is the universal custom. It is rather heroic, for most of them have beautiful hair. There is a story told of a Goratyn Jewess whose hair was

particularly magnificent, and who, with the consent of her bridegroom—who leant to the Rational side—managed to conceal it instead of cutting it off. But the discovery was made, and the enraged Orthodox burst into the house at night, gagged the husband, dragged the wife from her bed, and cropped her hair short.”

“More narrow superstition!” said Ortenegg, angrily. “Something must be done; we must have missionaries, priests to work among them, to pull them from this choking swamp, to tear open their poor blind eyes, to make them see the light against their will. We must have priests; oh, if my day had but come!” In answer to which I groaned and inquired:

“Have you seen her again?”

“Yes, I have seen her again,” said Ortenegg. He made not the smallest attempt at evasion, and did not for one in-

stant pretend not to know to whom I referred. Breaking off in the midst of his excited walk, he sank into a chair.

"I have seen her again several times," he said, staring fixedly at the floor, and now he had quite dropped his crusader manner. "She sometimes takes her brother's work to the people who have ordered it. That is whenever Surchen is otherwise occupied; but she generally goes after dark, or else is so muffled up in hideous shawls that she looks like an old woman."

"You seem to have informed yourself of other things besides the Jewish rites," I said dryly.

"I wonder," mused Ortenegg, as usual unheeding, "I wonder whether that girl is at all short-sighted? She doesn't seem to see one even if one crosses the road two paces straight in front of her. You would fancy, wouldn't you, that she would

at least hear the spurs, or the sword, or—or the voice?"

"You have got as far as the voice, have you?" I asked, with a sinking heart.

"Yes, I have got as far as saying 'Good-evening,'" he answered, looking straight and rather defiantly at me, "but she has never once made any reply; she doesn't seem in the least aware of my existence; I might just as well be one of the bushes by the road-side for any notice she takes of me."

Perhaps she is deaf as well as short-sighted," I suggested.

"Perhaps," he said with an impatient sigh, and clanked gloomily from the room.

I felt scarcely less gloomy than he did; for, by this time, I had no further doubt of what had happened to my friend. If it had been anybody else but Ortenegg, or if Ortenegg had been anybody but just him-

self, I should not have given a second thought to the matter; for, after all, what odds was it whether a Lancer lieutenant was or was not in love with a pretty Jewess? It might be as good a pastime as any other in a country station. And the pretty Jewess must just look out for herself; for, of course, no one would blame the Lancer lieutenant. But with Ortenegg the case was different. A young man who took life from such a frightfully serious side would always be incalculable. I could easily imagine him becoming so deeply involved in this new passion as to be rendered useless for all social purposes. The suddenness with which he had taken fire scarcely surprised me, I had expected that it would be so. I had studied my subject, and I knew that the surroundings of his childhood, the loneliness of the old castle, the silence of the monastery, the

gloom of the pine-forests and the roar of the mountain-torrents, had all worked together to feed large his imagination and to intensify his nature. I had often told myself that he was just a pile of firewood, seasoned to perfection and ready to blaze at a spark. But that it should have been a Jewess who threw that spark! My worst forebodings had never taken this shape. Curiosity is, however, quite compatible with disapproval, and after this conversation with Ortenegg my curiosity was naturally on the increase. A few days later this curiosity was satisfied.

Ortenegg and I were returning from the drilling-ground, where we had been losing our tempers over some more than usually blockheaded recruits, and we were both weary and consequently silent. It was getting towards the end of March now, and the snow had been melting for a week,

The road was one stretch of abominable slush, so that every single step that the horses took consisted of a squash and a squirt. The air was oppressively mild and distinctly enervating. It seemed to tell upon the horses as well as upon us, for they drooped their wet necks and dragged their sticky feet. The drilling-ground lay some way outside the town and towards the plains. The road which led back to the town was flanked on one side by a moderately broad and swiftly-rushing stream, just now swollen and turbid with the melted snow; on the other by a stiff pathway, paved with bricks and planted with young horse-chestnut trees that were still as dry as dead sticks. This was the fashionable afternoon lounge of Goratyn. On sunshiny Sundays I have seen it tight-packed, but to-day it was deserted, except for two figures sitting side by side on one of the benches a little

way off. It was just beginning to grow dusk, so it was only when we got opposite to the bench that I recognised the little Jewess, Surchen Marmorstein, in one of the figures. She was talking very eagerly and animatedly to the person beside her, who was wrapped in a shawl drawn half over her face, and whom I passed over indifferently as being probably some aged relative. I was just turning to Ortenegg with some remark about Surchen when he pulled up his horse, and facing towards the bench, called out in a somewhat fierce manner a remark to the effect that this was a mild evening. Instantly there was a transformation; Surchen's companion started from the seat, as though the harmless greeting had been the prick of a serpent. In her flurry she let go her shawl, and I beheld a white face out of which flashed a pair of deep-brown eyes. There was just

daylight enough remaining to show that her hair was the purest specimen of red-gold that had yet come under my notice. I knew in an instant that this was Salome. For about half a minute she stood and stared at Ortenegg, and Ortenegg stared back at her. Her lips were apart, and she seemed to me to be breathing rather hard. Then she turned to Surchen, and said something very quickly in Hebrew. I don't know Hebrew, but by the tremble of anger in her voice I could guess that she was saying, "It is you who have done this." She threw a wild glance up and down the road. I saw her look at the stream; there was a narrow plank which crossed it at this place. In one instant she had darted across the road, right in front of Ortenegg's horse, and was on the other side of the water. Without saying a word of any sort, Ortenegg turned his horse and put it at

the brook. Surchen and I were left on the road.

“*Was* it your doing, wretched child?” I asked. “Did you bring your sister here?”

Surchen had broken into a radiant smile. “Oh, look!” she cried, clapping her pretty hands. “He is over the water; she cannot get away now—she will have to speak to him. Do you think that he will write her letters, as the Rittmeister Berman did to Rebecca Kazles? I could carry the letters, you know, and the Rittmeister never gave me less than five Sechsers for one, and sometimes a pair of his old boots.”

I am not easily disgusted, but I turned from Surchen now, for this was too much for me. Ortenegg had cleared the stream a few yards above the plank, and had thus cut off the girl's path. I saw her standing stock still, as though in sullen defiance. It

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was not a very broad stream to jump, but the banks were bad and the ground slippery; and so, though I was determined to lend the protection of my presence to that *tête-à-tête* over there, I remembered in time that I had not so much money to spend upon horses as Ortenegg, and quietly made for the bridge, which was not far off. When I reached my friend I found that he was standing beside his horse, looking perplexed and angered. Both he and Salome were so completely splashed and sprinkled with mud from their feet up to their eyebrows, that they were almost the colour of the road; but the Jewess, with her uncovered golden head, looked magnificent. She stood very erect and was speaking passionately. "Why will you cross my road for ever and ever? Why will you come for ever in my way? Are there not Christian girls enough? Cannot you let me go in peace? Look for your

amusements elsewhere; buy your playthings somewhere else——”

“Stop!” said Ortenegg, looking very pale. “Have I ever said a word that could offend you?”

She seemed to me to waver for an instant, and to strain her hands together tightly.

“You have said no word,” she answered, relapsing into her sullen manner; “you have given me no offence in words, because I have silenced you with my silence. But what are your looks but offence? What is your kindness but insult? Leave me. I know the Christians; they would take from us all we have if it were not that our God does sometimes put out his arm over us;” and gathering her shabby shawl superbly around her, she turned and left us.

Ortenegg stood immovable, following her with his eyes as she trod the wet path. It

was not till she had grown indistinct in the gloom that he turned to me, drawing a long breath.

“And to think,” he cried, striking his clenched hand upon his breast, “to think that that glorious woman is blind with the blindness of those unhappy Jews! But it cannot be; it cannot remain so—Zultowski, it cannot!”

“Is she to be the first of your converts?” I inquired. “And was it because you were in such a hurry about beginning your mission work that you imperilled your mare’s legs just now?”

“Silence!” thundered Ortenegg, in a certain imperious way which he had at times about him. I humoured him, and was silent. He remounted his horse, and did not speak again till we were close to the barracks. Then he said suddenly:

“My looks! What did she mean by my

looks offending her? How do I look at her, Zultowski?"

"Rather hard, that is all; not at all like an embryo missionary priest at an embryo convert."

"That is strange, certainly; I was not aware of it." Then after a silence, "It is strange, too, is it not, that she *had* noticed me those other times, though she made no sign?"

"No," I answered, with pitying superiority, "that is not nearly so strange."

"Why not?"

"Oh, because different women have got different ways of doing things, and that is the way some of them do it." But I could see by Ortenegg's face that, instead of being enlightened, he was hopelessly puzzled.

After this I did not hear a word about Salome for some time, nor about the Jews either, for Ortenegg had become more taci-

turn than ever. But this silence did not reassure me.

"Have you seen her again?" I ventured to inquire.

"Yes, once," he replied. "I passed her on the road, but, of course, I did not look at her. She looked straight in front of her, and so did I. I would not for worlds have her think that I meant to offend her." Then he sighed and added, "It is a pity she should be so suspicious. It comes from the hunted life they lead." And he looked at me savagely, as though I were personally responsible for the hunting of all the Jews in Poland.

This report made me feel easier in my mind, and I began to hope that matters were taking a right turn. And so they might have done, had there not occurred an unfortunate incident which gave them so wrong a twist that they remained twisted

for many a day after. And it was a mere piece of nonsense which led to it all—a harmless joke played upon a handful of slipshod Jews.

I had been busy in the inner court of the barracks, inspecting the hay stores, and was just about to make my way out through a small postern door, when I heard shouts of laughter coming from the other side of the castle, for these barracks had originally been an old family residence, which somebody had found convenient to sell to the Government. It had heavily grated windows, a clumsy round tower, the traces of a moat, and the remains of a drawbridge.

The laughter came from the side where the old kitchen-garden had been turned into an uncovered riding-school, and to my surprise there were words of command and cracks of the whip mingled with the laughter, although I knew that the men

had been dismissed some time ago. Piqued by curiosity I made my way round, and very soon was laughing as loud as the others. The riding-school, a large square space enclosed with a wooden rail, was still in a comparatively swampy condition. In the centre of it stood one of my comrades flourishing his big training-whip, while round it, in regular order, through the mud and in and out of the puddles, were panting and plunging some ten or twelve frantic-looking Jews, their kaftans flying behind them, their streaming side-locks quite uncurled by the pace at which they went. They were being put through the regular riding-school paces. "*Schulter herein! Wendung rechts! Trab! Galopp!*" rang through the air, and the lanky, hook-nosed wretches came ambling past in a line, vainly clutching at their kaftans to keep them from the mud, and with a helpless grin, half pleased and half

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frightened, upon their faces. Most of their fur caps sat at a tipsily crooked angle; one man howled out that he had lost his slipper in the mud, but a touch of the long whip on his shoulder sent him scampering on in his stocking.

I laughed till my sides ached, and two or three other young officers who, like me, were lounging against the wooden rail, filled the air with their shouts of approval. Suddenly I became aware that another spectator had joined us, for there was a shadow beside me. I turned my head and saw Ortenegg. He looked deeply annoyed, and his eyebrows were drawn together in a way which made them appear like one black line across his forehead.

“You are laughing?” he said indignantly.

“And you are not?” I replied.

He turned away and walked to the middle of the riding-school. I saw him

speak to the man who held the whip, and who had been the inventor of this excellent comedy. He was a lieutenant, of Ortenegg's own rank, and, by reason of having yellow whiskers and of having once been mistaken by a Vienna sentry for one of the Emperor's brothers, he generally went by the name of the "false Archduke." His brains were not very strong, and the sentry's mistake seemed to have injured them permanently. The consequence was that he very often forgot that he was not an archduke. When Ortenegg spoke to him he just shrugged his shoulders and cracked his whip again. I had stopped laughing now, and so had the others. We looked on with some curiosity, wondering what Ortenegg would do, for, to judge from his face, he certainly meant to do something. All at once we heard his voice ringing out. It quite drowned the commands of *Trab* and *Galopp*.

"What are you doing here?" he shouted. "Are you not ashamed of being made into clowns and harlequins? Is there not one man among you with a man's soul? Shame upon you! Go home all of you! Go home, I say!" There was a dead silence, and one or two of the Jews seemed to falter a little in the "collected trot" at which they were going. At last one young fellow screamed out, "If we go home we shall not get the Sechser (about twopence) which the Pan Lieutenant has promised each of us."

I saw Ortenegg make a movement as though of disgust. "I will give you two Sechsers each," he called out scornfully, "if you go home at once."

At this there was a yell of joy all down the line, and the ranks of kaftans began to fall into disorder.

The "false Archduke" stepped up to

Ortenegg's side; he was scarlet with vexation. "I will give you three Sechsers each," he shouted, "if you stay."

There was another howl down the ranks, and they began uncertainly to form again. I could see by Ortenegg's face the extreme distaste which he felt for this auctioneering business in which he found himself unawares involved, but he did not hesitate for any perceptible time. "If you go home *at once*," he said, loudly and distinctly, "you shall have half a florin, each of you."

Before any response could come, the other man, beside himself with anger, cried out, "No, you shall not go; a florin to every man who stays!"

"The Pan Lieutenant would have to go to Jacob Enteres for the money first," piped out a small Hebrew at the end of the line.

There was a titter among the lookers-on.

Jacob Enteres was the money-lender of the place, and everyone knew that the "false Archduke's" fortunes were not at all on an archducal scale. Besides, we were getting towards the end of the month, when most pockets were empty. But Ortenegg's was not; he was the Croesus among us, as the Jews knew perfectly well. As he pulled out his purse they were round him in a minute, screaming and clamouring. What he paid them finally I do not know, but they went away. The "Archduke" was gone before them. He had not been able to recover from that titter among his comrades. As the Jews crowded round Ortenegg he flung his whip to the ground and stalked off the scene. I felt certain that from that moment the man would hate Ortenegg; for there is nothing which Archdukes, whether real or false, resent so much as being made ridiculous.

But the very next day he had his revenge.

We used to dine at one o'clock all together in the big inn which looked on to the *Platz*. It was entered by a covered archway, through which waggons and carriages could be driven into the inner yard. On the day following that of the affair in the riding-school, Ortenegg and I, entering this rather dark passage, ran against a woman who was coming out. She was carrying a parcel, and, as Ortenegg's arm brushed against her, the loose paper wrapping gave way, and blue and pink bobbins rained on to the ground.

"I beg your pardon," Ortenegg began, grabbing after the bobbins; and at that moment we both recognised Salome. She said nothing, but held open the paper while Ortenegg put back a handful of bobbins.

“What is it?” drawled a voice behind us. “Anything worth seeing in that paper? What is he bending and peering at? Didn’t know Ortenegg was shortsighted”—for, in fact, Ortenegg was taking an absurdly long time to resettlement the packet—“oh, bobbins? That’s all, is it? Salome Marmorstein and bobbins. There’s one more there; I’ll fetch it.” By the simper on his face and the aggressive tone of his voice I could see that the “false Archduke” wished to provoke Ortenegg. He evidently imagined that he had scented out a little game of his comrade’s, and probably thought that to spoil the sport would be an excellent way of paying off his grudge against him. One of the bobbins had rolled right across the passage. He picked it up and brought it to Salome.

“Not without payment,” he smirked, as she put out her hand, and carelessly throwing his arm round her waist he attempted

to kiss her. She had sprung aside in an instant, and Ortenegg started forward. He was white with passion. I saw his fingers convulsively closing themselves and, for a moment, I feared that we were going to have a brawl. But he mastered himself.

"You are a coward," he said, just above his breath, but very plainly.

"Ortenegg!" gasped the other, thunder-struck; for it was not by any means the first time that he had kissed a pretty Jewess, and it was the first time he had been called a coward. He stood panting against the wall as though Ortenegg had given him a slap on the face.

"It is only cowards who insult women," said Ortenegg again.

But I thought there had been enough of this. "Come," I said, putting my arm through his, "the rest of this matter requires more privacy than an inn passage can afford."

Then I looked round for Salome, but she had disappeared.

CHAPTER IV.

THE duel came off next day. How Ortenegg managed to keep his cloister-bred conscience silent I do not know, but he fought with a right good-will, and yet he had the worst of it. The "false Archduke" was a very neat fencer, and my friend left the ground with a flesh-wound on his arm. It was nothing in the least serious, but it obliged him to wear a sling for a time. He refused to stay in his room even for one day. On the very morning after the duel he came downstairs, though his captain—himself an *enragé* duellist—had leniently exempted him from duty. I was busy with

the hay again, and as the old castle chapel happened to be in use as our hay store-room, it was here that Ortenegg found me. The place was not much like a chapel now, for everything that could be removed had long ago found its way to the Jews; altar and niches were gone, and even the pulpit had been torn down, for good carving always fetches its price. There remained only the crosses painted on the walls and the stone knights on the tombs, which the noble Count Pierinski had been forced to leave alone, for ancestors in this shape are certainly unwieldy things to deal with. I believe that not a shilling's worth of mortar had been spent on the place for at least a century, and it is certain that some of the stone tombs gaped a little, and that I have occasionally found my terrier, Naps, playing with curious looking bones that bore a very white and exceedingly venerable appear-

ance, and were certainly not the bones of either ox or sheep. But if Count Pierinski did not mind, why should I? Ortenegg had often expressed his dislike to seeing the chapel used as a hay store; but to-day he made no remark of the sort, or of any sort, but sat down silently on one of the wooden cases that were standing about on the marble floor. He looked still a little pale and languid from the loss of blood. It was mid-day and the men had gone off to their dinner. I sat down on another case opposite him, and presently Ortenegg's servant, Franz, poked his head inquiringly through the door. Franz was a family servant whom Ortenegg had brought with him from his "*Schloss*;" he was a hard-headed German, desperately devoted to his master. The duel had put him nearly out of his mind with anxiety, and all the morning Franz had been stalking the wounded

man with a wine bottle under his arm (Count Ortenegg supplied his son with the most excellent wine) and a glass in his hand, evidently mistrustful of this rapid recovery.

“Put the wine down, in Heaven’s name,” said Ortenegg, impatiently, “and go to your dinner.”

Franz obeyed; but not more than two minutes later he put in his head again and announced that a woman was inquiring for the Herr Graf, and, almost before he had done saying it, the woman herself brushed past him and advanced with an eager yet faltering step to the middle of the chapel. Before I had seen her face some presentiment told me that it was Salome. She stopped straight in front of Ortenegg, who had risen.

“It is true, then!” she cried, extending her hands and clasping them with a sudden

vehement gesture. "You fought—for me; you have been wounded—for me, a Jewish girl, an enemy, an outcast; you would not let me be insulted! Oh, how good you are, and how I have wronged you! Oh, how I thank you, how I thank you!" With the last words her voice broke a little, and she tremblingly put out her hand and softly and timidly touched Ortenegg's wounded arm with her finger-tips, as though to convince her senses of some fact that seemed to them incredible. "For me," she said under her breath—"for me." And the tears were in her eyes.

Ortenegg stood like a statue, gazing into her face; and I gazed not a whit less hard than he, for, transformed by her excitement, she was a sight worth seeing. Her father might be a dealer in bones and skins, and wear slippers down at heel, and be called Berisch Marmorstein; her brother

might be a villanously bad ladies' tailor, and her sister might be Surchen, but at this moment, taken out of her natural surroundings, I could realise only the fact that she was a pathetically handsome and passionately moved woman. Even in my short glimpses of her I had noticed that Salome, meanly though she was clad, was far more dainty and precise in her dress than the majority of young Polish Jewesses, and that she possessed in a higher degree that refinement of look which youthful Jewesses undoubtedly do possess, though time invariably turns it into the opposite, and which, perhaps, is no more than a sheen of varnish lent them by their oriental nature. So long as it lasts it puts them on a distinctly different level from the ordinary European girl of the lower classes.

As Salome's fingers touched Ortenegg's arm a shudder ran through her and she

staggered backwards, clutching in the air as though seized with sudden dizziness. A spot of blood had soaked through the bandage, and some women cannot stand the sight of blood.

"The wine, quick!" said Ortenegg, pointing to the bottle. "She is going to faint."

Inwardly blessing Franz's importunity, I poured out the wine. Salome was already half-recovered; she stood leaning against the wall, and mechanically she put out her hand for the glass. Then suddenly she drew it back.

"No," she said—"no, I cannot; not under this roof. It is forbidden to us."

Ortenegg looked provoked.

"Drink it," he said, "you are not yet recovered."

But Salome was staring about her in a panic. She had only just now realised the place she was in. As her eyes fell on the

Kappelle

cross painted on the wall she uttered a sort of shriek, and again pushed away the glass I held towards her.

"Oh, not here, not here," she said, trembling violently. "It is forbidden to us; if they were to know!"

Ortenegg's brow was clouding still more and more.

"Who?" he said. "If who were to know? Why are you trembling? What is it you are afraid of?"

"My father, the Rabbi—it is death to our souls, they say, to drink of your wine or eat of your food."

"And I tell you that it is not," broke in Ortenegg, taking the glass from my hand; "it cannot be death to your soul to take what is necessary to support your body. You must drink this, and you must rest; you have walked very fast, and you are not fit to walk home again without rest." As

he spoke he was clearing some bundles of hay off one of the old chapel benches which stood against the wall. All the colour had left Salome's cheeks; she gazed up wildly into Ortenegg's face, as though imploring for mercy; then her whole figure seemed to droop into submission; without a word she sat down on the bench, and taking the glass from Ortenegg's hand slowly drank off the wine. She looked a very different creature from the exasperated woman who had turned upon this same man before her that evening in the dusk. At that moment I was called for outside, and when I returned the chapel was empty.

"Was it Tokayer wine which the Herr Lieutenant gave Salome to drink?" Surchen inquired of me that same afternoon when I stumbled upon her by chance on the *Platz*. The little wretch accosted me quite familiarly now, and I suffered it only be-

cause the depraved imp was a really entertaining morsel of humanity.

"Did Salome tell you about the wine?" I asked.

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"I made her tell me; and do you think the Herr Lieutenant would let me have six bottles to sell to the Pan Starost? The Starost pays well for Tokayer. I would give the Herr Lieutenant the same price that he pays for it. It *was* Tokayer, was it not?"

"She had better go and taste it herself," I answered laughing, "unless she has her sister's scruples about drinking under a Christian roof." Surchen contemptuously shrugged her exquisite small shoulders.

"It was stupid of Salome to make a fuss; I am not like that. First she did not drink because she was frightened of Väterle and the Rabbi, and then she did drink because she was frightened of the Herr Lieu-

tenant. Salome is always frightened of somebody or other."

"And you? Which are you most frightened of—the Rabbi or the Pan Lieutenant?"

"Neither of one nor of the other," said Surchen, snapping her fingers; "I should have drunk the wine because Tokayer is good!"

It was not till evening that Ortenegg had a chance of discussing the morning's scene with me. "Did you see how amenable she was to reason?" he began triumphantly. "How she gave way when I argued with her?"

"I saw that she gave way, certainly," I replied reflectively, for in the interval I had been pondering over various things; "but I am not sure that reason had much hand in the matter, and in point of fact your arguments were somewhat picturesquely

vague; they couldn't have convinced a kitten. Shall I tell you what is my real opinion of that wonderful emotional Salome who seems to live in the extremes of fire and frost, and who when she is not a lay-figure is a blazing furnace? I believe that she has got no moral backbone."

"Nonsense," said Ortenegg. "She has a big soul, an enormous soul. I can see it in her eyes."

"I dare say she has, and she has certainly got nerves; but that big soul is hampered and chained by the smallest of superstitions, and that same superstition has dwarfed her intellect and stunted her will. You need not look indignant, it is a very ordinary phenomenon. You have no idea of the subjection of intellect in which Jewish women are brought up. The old bondage of religious terror is upon them still; few, very few, have broken from it, and all I say

is that Salome has not. Now Surchen's ideas, for instance, are a century in advance of Salome's. Whether she has picked them up from books or people I don't know, but I believe that in point of mental emancipation the little imp quite beats all the most rational Jews of the period. I take her to be a perfect freethinker, who in her innermost heart of hearts has not got a tittle of respect for the whole law of Moses, or for any other law except that of money-making."

"She is a degraded nature," said Orte-negg.

"No, she is not; for to be degraded you must have fallen from something, sunk from something, and this creature, I am convinced, has never lost her innocence, because she never had it. She is simply an interesting natural phenomenon, without the trace of a soul, but with business capabilities

sufficient to undertake the direction of all the concerns of all the Rothschild houses to-morrow morning if necessary. And, say what you like, she has ten times more character than Salome. Salome looks like a marble statue, but she is really a wax figure. She has not been able to emancipate herself from the bondage of bigotry, as Surchen has done. She has got in her soul all the terror of fanaticism, but none of its strength. Put Surchen into the position that Salome was in this morning, and she will smack her lips over the Tokayer, and her only emotion will be a regret that so valuable an "object" for a *Geschäft* should be wasted in this profitless manner; and again, put old Marmorstein in the same position, and you can beat him to death if you like, but you will not get him to put his lips to a glass from which you have drunk. I remember an old crippled Jew

whom we came across last summer during the manœuvres, living alone in a mud hut on a perfectly desolate spot. We were hungry and thirsty; the old Jew had in his hut a stone pitcher full of water and half a loaf of brown bread. He sold us the bread, but when we asked for his knife to cut it with he refused point blank. We ended by tearing it out of his hand, for we were in a hurry. He stood and watched us quite quietly while we ate the bread and drank from the pitcher. He knew that we were five against one. When we had done he took the knife, broke the blade in two and threw the pieces out of the door; then he fetched a stone and pounded the pitcher into pieces. He had no other knife and no other vessel of any sort in his hut, and he probably had not money enough to buy others; in any case he would have to limp ten miles to the nearest place where he

could get them. That Jew had the strength of fanaticism, and this is what I say that Salome has not. She is orthodox only because she is frightened to be anything else."

"There is all the more hope, then, of rescuing her," said Ortenegg. And in the weeks that followed, this was apparently what he endeavoured to do. After that day in the old chapel Salome no longer fled from him. As the summer advanced I know that they met frequently, whether by chance or preconcerted arrangement I forebore to inquire. I know also, by the remarks which Ortenegg dropped, that religion was actually the chief subject of their conversation, and therefrom I concluded that he still honestly believed his interest in the beautiful Jewess to be no more than a mystic interest in her soul. In his ignorance of the world I do not think it ever once

occurred to him that he might be injuring the girl's fair fame; and I suppose that the girl herself had lost all sight of prudence.

Soon I began to perceive that I was not the only person who was aware of those semi-religious meetings. Symptoms of discontent began to show themselves among the Jews of Goratyn, for Berisch Marmorstein, notwithstanding his humble position, was held in high esteem by his fellow-Hebrews as an Orthodox among the Orthodox. At that time the Jews of the place happened to be in a somewhat restless and suspicious state. Within the last year there had been more than one case in which Hebrew fathers with handsome daughters had, with or without reason, considered that they had cause for bitter complaint against men who wore the uniform of his Majesty Francis Joseph. By degrees I

noticed that threatening glances were being thrown at Ortenegg whenever he showed himself on the *Platz*, and soon it became evident that some rumour had reached the ears of Berisch Marmorstein, for Salome ceased to be seen. I know that for ten consecutive days Ortenegg failed to catch a single glimpse of her. The tenth of these—to him—blank days happened to be a Saturday. Just after sunset Ortenegg and I were slowly crossing the *Platz*. He had been in a restless mood all the week, and to-day seemed to be debating with himself as to what action he should take. The Jews were just opening their shops again after the *Schabbes* (Sabbath). I was deep in the narrative of some military grievance, and so did not notice that after crossing the *Platz* Ortenegg was leading the way through the tangle of narrow streets, which in this part of the town crossed and re-

crossed each other like a web. Suddenly he stood still.

"I am going in here," he said hastily; "you can come or not, as you like."

I looked about me, and saw that we stood in front of a tumble-down covered archway.

"In here? What to do?"

"I am going to ask what it is all about; why they have hidden her from me. I have not done her any harm; I want at least to be told that she is not kept a prisoner against her will."

"You had far better leave it alone."

"No, I cannot leave it alone," answered Ortenegg. "I must speak to Berisch Marmorstein;" and he strode before me into the yard. Reluctantly I followed. He walked straight to the door headed "Berisch Marmorstein," opened it, and quickly traversed the species of cellar which old Marmorstein

had turned into his storehouse of skins and bones. Then, still at Ortenegg's heels, I found myself panting up several flights of narrow wooden stairs. After we had passed a good many doors—for the house was a perfect beehive of small lodgings—Ortenegg stood still at last.

There was a sound of women's voices chattering loudly within the room alongside. Some event of importance seemed under discussion, but whether these were words of condolence or of congratulation was not easy to distinguish. Ortenegg, having knocked at the door without getting any answer, turned the handle and entered the room. The table on which the *Schabbes* meals had been taken still stood covered with a linen cloth in the centre of the large attic room. The big book out of which *Schabbes* tales and *Schabbes* prayers had been read lay on the window sill; Salome, with

a white rag in her hand, was occupied in polishing up one of the brass candelabra in which the wax lights had been burnt, and which she was in process of stowing away for the week. Berisch Marmorstein was not in the room; but David, who had lost no time after the sinking of the sun, was seated in a corner stitching away at a silk skirt of some sort. Surchen was not visible; no doubt the little villain was scouring the country, already on the track of some new *Geschäft* which her fertile brain had concocted during the long hours of enforced quietude and supposed piety of the *Schabbes*. On two chairs by the window sat two hideous old Jewesses, with their heaviest brocade and their best pearls still on, both talking at the top of their exceedingly nasal voices and gesticulating frantically with their fat white hands. One of them wore a wig made of brown satin, with a thin white

cord sewed down the centre to represent the parting. This is the sort of wig most generally worn by Polish Jewesses. The other had upon her head a more modern construction, composed of yellow thread.

"Is anything the matter? Has any misfortune occurred?" asked Ortenegg, standing still.

The two old women sprang, or rather waddled, to their feet and stared, evidently amazed at our intrusion. In one of them I recognised the wife of the money-lender, Jacob Enteres, in the other the landlady of the inn, Frau Kazles. They were both relatives of some sort of the Marmorstein family.

The fat landlady, she of the crimson brocade and the yellow thread head-dress, was the one who first recovered her tongue.

"No misfortune, Pan Lieutenant," she began in a greasily servile voice, "quite the

contrary; a great piece of fortune. Esther Enteres and I were making our felicitations to David Marmorstein on his marriage that is to be. David Marmorstein is to be married to Deborah Goldwasser, the daughter of Abraham Goldwasser at Marnopol. The *Heiraths - Vermittler* (marriage-agent) was here yesterday."

"And Abraham Goldwasser is made of money," screamed Esther Enteres. "*Gott und die Welt!* he is just made of money! David Marmorstein is a happy man. Is he not?" And she turned to David, who merely nodded without interrupting his stitching. "Berisch Marmorstein is beside himself with joy at this good luck."

"And Deborah Goldwasser? Is she beside herself with joy too?" asked Ortenegg, by way of saying something civil.

"Deborah Goldwasser?" echoed the fat landlady. "Oh, Deborah Goldwasser will be

content enough when she is told. Wherefore should she not be content?"

"*When* she is told?" echoed Ortenegg, looking all at once both shocked and interested. "What on earth do you mean?"

"Why," broke in the money-lender's wife, "she means that they are generally only told when the last arrangements have been made. As soon as Abraham Goldwasser has the agent's answer he will send for his daughter and he will say: 'Deborah, from this day you are betrothed to David, the son of Berisch Marmorstein; see that your linen is hemmed.'"

"And if Deborah Goldwasser then declares that she does not care for David Marmorstein and does not wish to marry him?"

"*Care* for him!" screamed the Jewess, goggling hideously in her astonishment. "*Gott und die Welt!* How should she

care for him when she has never seen of him so much as a single curl of his hair? No one would think of asking her so foolish a question. Did the Herr Lieutenant think that David Marmorstein could leave his work to go a-courting? If he could even think of such a thing then Abraham Goldwasser would never have such an idler for his son-in-law; that is certain." And both Jewesses went off into a peal of cracked laughter, overcome apparently by the vision of David in this new character.

"But that is not a marriage," said Ortenegg, looking perfectly scandalised; "that is a deed of sale."

"But we have no other way of marrying," cried Frau Enteres, brandishing her ten fingers. "That is the way that our fathers have married before us and that our children will marry after us; the way that Jacob Enteres married me, and that Veitel Kazles

married Rebecca there, and that Berisch Marmorstein married his wife Lea. That is the way that David here is marrying now, and that is the way that Salome there will marry some day."

"It is monstrous!" said Ortenegg, suddenly bringing down his closed hand on the table beside him, so that the glasses that stood there jingled loudly. "David Marmorstein, is this true what they say?"

"Quite true, Herr Lieutenant," answered David, quietly going on with his work.

"But do you not know that marriage on these terms is a sin; a fearful sin against God and Nature?"

The young Jew's needle remained transfixed in the air, so much was he astonished at this address. Frau Kazles collapsed on to her chair so suddenly that her stiff brocade swelled into crimson billows all around her, while Esther Enteres, being a

woman of more metal, remained on her feet, goggling her eyes and struggling for breath, for stupefaction seemed to have affected her lungs.

The subject of money-marriages was one on which I knew that Ortenegg felt very strongly, for we had often discussed the point, and more especially in reference to the Jews. In a general sort of way he had known perfectly well that every Jewish marriage is a business arrangement, but he had never had so glaring an instance thrust so immediately under his notice. I dare say he believed that it was nothing but the glaring nature of this instance which was pushing him to speak now; but I knew otherwise. I knew that it was one word dropped by Esther Enteres which had lit this fire; the suggestion of that future day on which Berisch Marmorstein would send for his daughter and would say: "Salome,

from this day forth you are betrothed to Moses the son of Isaac Rosenstock, or to Aron the son of Zacharias Liliienstengel." It was the horror of that prophetic vision which had driven him mad for the moment. Did he perhaps dimly fancy that by remonstrating with her brother he was struggling to save Salome from the fate of Deborah Goldwasser?

"But," said David Marmorstein, having a little recovered from his surprise, "Abraham Goldwasser has got the largest business in Marnopol, and Deborah is an excellent book-keeper and is used to the counter; nothing could suit better."

"*Suit!*" Ortenegg repeated; "and have you ever inquired whether anything else suits except the business? Whether Deborah Goldwasser and you, by any chance, happen to suit? Whether your tempers suit? Your tastes? Your hearts? How will it be if

you find out too late that you have made a mistake?" The tailor had resumed his stitching.

"There can be no mistake," he said, complacently; "it has all been made quite safe. We are to be partners in business. The provisions are written out quite clearly."

"And who is to provide you against yourselves?" cried Ortenegg. "Who tells you that your happiness is safe as well as your money? Deborah Goldwasser can keep accounts, you say, and stand behind the counter? But is it a cashier you want or a wife? A hired creature to sell your goods, or a woman who has chosen you and whom you have chosen, to love, and to be loved by, for life?"

At this moment my attention was caught by a long-drawn breath behind me; and, turning my head, I saw that Salome had put down the brass candelabrum she had

been cleaning, and with her wide-open eyes fixed on Ortenegg's face, was slowly, and it seemed almost unconsciously, drawing near to where he stood. Her face was very pale, but wonderfully beautiful. I don't know whether Ortenegg saw her; his eyes, at any rate, remained fixed upon David.

"Partners!" he cried, and there was something like a tearful laugh in his voice. "You have got a partner in business you tell me, but is that all you want? Do you not need a partner for your joys as well, and for your pains? A partner for your life and for your death, a friend whose thoughts you can share, whose heart will be yours; and do you expect the woman you have bought to be that—to be all that to you? Is her love in the bargain too, or only her money?" His voice rang through the room. Salome had drawn quite close to the speaker now. As he broke off, with

his flashing eyes still upon David, she suddenly burst into tears, and with her face hidden in her hands ran from the room.

I saw Ortenegg make a movement as though to follow her; and I saw also that the two old Jewesses, who had exchanged a hawk-like glance, were watching him so intently that they seemed almost to grudge themselves the relaxation of blinking. Perhaps Ortenegg saw that too, for he turned again to David and continued the argument, but he spoke absently now and very much beside the point. The fire had all at once gone out of him. It must have been about ten minutes later that we left the room, leaving the hardened tailor not a whit shaken in his allegiance to Deborah Goldwasser. Ortenegg strode on in silence through the narrow courtyard, a few paces in front of me. We had got to about the middle of the yard when we met Salome

face to face. She was returning slowly towards the house, evidently under the impression that we had gone. Her golden hair was disordered, and her eyelids red with weeping. Ortenegg stood still in front of her; he put out his two hands: "Salome!" was all he said; "Salome!" and she said nothing at all, but humbly lifted her eyes to his, allowed her fingers to be clasped by his, and raised her face, but slowly and unwillingly, as though she would rather have drooped it if she could. And then some unaccountable feeling of awe took possession of me, and acting upon an impulse as illogical as it was irresistible, I passed them quickly and stepped out into the street, leaving those two standing alone in the dusk of the summer evening.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN I met Ortenegg next day he looked as if he had slept badly, and he made no allusion whatever to the Marmorstein family. Watching him cautiously, I came to the conclusion that some sort of crisis had been reached and that some sort of battle was being fought out; and I also perceived that Ortenegg wished to fight it out by himself. For some days his avoidance of my society was so marked that I began to tell myself, with a curious sort of pain, that I was shut out of his confidence for ever. A week passed in this way, and then one evening, to my surprise, my comrade entered unannounced, just as he used to do in the early days of our friendship. He

threw himself silently into a chair. He looked tired, but all traces of the excitement I had noticed lately had vanished.

"Zultowski," he began after a minute's dead silence, "will you come with me to Berisch Marmorstein? I am going there now."

"What are you going to do there?" I asked, wheeling round in my chair, for this was not at all what I had expected.

"To speak to him about his daughter—to ask his consent."

"To her baptism?" I asked, a little short of breath.

"Yes, to her baptism." He paused for an instant, fixing his eyes on my face. "She has promised to receive baptism before becoming my wife."

I had stood up when he began his sentence, but as he finished it I sat down again, or rather my knees seemed to fold up under

me, quite of their own accord and without any volition of mine, so that I came down on my chair again with more suddenness than grace. For a minute we stared across the room at each other, he very calm, I very vacant. I don't think that even in my wildest moments of apprehension—no, I really do not think—that I had ever expected this to happen. Presently I groped for my handkerchief and passed it across my forehead, which was quite damp.

“Ortenegg,” I said, shakily, “I have never heard you make a joke before, either bad or good; but of course this is one; but—but I don't think it is at all a good one.”

He smiled faintly, and as I thought, rather wearily.

“You are right,” he said, “I never make jokes. I am on my way now to Berisch Marmorstein to ask for the hand of his

daughter, and I should like you to come with me; but, of course, if you object, I can go by myself."

"The hand of his daughter!" I shrieked, starting up, convinced by his tone that this was no ghastly pleasantry. "You, the Count von Ortenegg, the only son of your father, the last of your line, propose to offer yourself as a husband to the daughter of a Jewish dealer in bones, the sister of a Jewish tailor? You, who have the world before you? Ortenegg, say that it is not true—say something! Don't look at me so. Don't smile—don't sigh! What does it mean? You are driving me out of my senses with terror," and I rushed to him and tore away the hand which he had put across his eyes.

"It means that I cannot do otherwise," said Ortenegg, slowly. "It means that it is stronger than I am. Yes, all you say is

true. I have the world before me, and I am going to do without the world; I have got a hundred ancestors at my back, and I am going to bring upon their race that which they would have feared more than extinction; I have got an old father, and I am going to break his heart. Do you think these are joyful thoughts? Do you think that it is so very much easier for me than for any other man to ruin himself, even if only in the eyes of society! Do you think that if I had been able to tear that woman out of my heart I would not have done so? What do you suppose this last week has been to me? Look at my face."

And I looked as he told me, and stepped back, shocked by the revelation. I had not seen him so close for some days. It was not only that he had lost flesh more than I should have thought possible in so short a

space, but there was a heavy shadow beneath his eyes and cruel lines ploughed about his mouth which but a few weeks back had been as unmarked as that of a boy.

“Have you convinced yourself,” said Ortenegg, quietly, “and will you come with me now?” He got up as he spoke. Upon the wall straight opposite there hung a mirror, and as Ortenegg got to his feet I caught sight of our two figures reflected side by side. I observed that the top of my head was not quite so high as his chin, and with the somewhat mortifying recognition of this fact there rushed over me all my old feeling of pride in this tall and handsome comrade whom I had destined to be a social success. What! this man, with the glance of a crusader and the stature of a god, the husband of an obscure Hebrew girl! Not while I had wit enough remaining to shape the most forlorn hope of an

objection, and breath enough to put it into words.

"No!" I cried, flinging away from him, "I will not go with you. I will have nothing to do with it. Why did you ever come here? Anything would have been better than this. I wish, oh! I wish that you had become a priest!" And falling once more upon my chair I buried my face in my arms, and, if I had known how to cry, I think I should have cried then.

"Perhaps it would have been better," said Ortenegg, rather sadly, "but I shall never be a priest now. I want you to understand me, Zultowski. I know that what I am going to do is rather a terrible thing, and I only do it because the other course, the course of giving up Salome, seems so much more terrible. I love this woman. I have gained her love and I cannot do without her. I came to you for help

and advice. You can help me a great deal, and also you can hinder me. You can put a lot of little sticks and stones in my path which I shall have to clear away. It lies with you either to make it easy or difficult for me, but whether easy or difficult, you know quite well that I will do it." He stopped and waited, but I said nothing. "I am sorry you are not coming," said Ortenegg, having waited quite patiently while for several dreary minutes I sulked with my face on my sleeve. This patience was something quite new in him. It seemed to be the result of mental exhaustion, but, through it all, I felt that his will was set like a flint.

"Ortenegg," I broke silence at last, I don't know on what impulse, "you have cheated the world of a very fine spectacle by not being born a villain. If you did not happen to be a good man the devil himself

would not have been your match." Then I rose and followed him dejectedly.

We walked in silence through the streets. I felt terribly helpless and also painfully humiliated at the thought of how little, after all, I had said, how little I had done and was doing for the rescue of my friend. At every step of the way between the barracks and the Marmorstein lodging I hoped against hope that something might happen to delay this horror that was to come to pass. But nothing happened; heavily though I lagged, we reached the house unmolested. Just as we got to the entrance it occurred to me to ask Ortenegg whether Salome knew that he was coming.

"No," he answered, "I did not know it myself. I decided suddenly. We had come to no definite plan, but of course this is the only thing to be done."

The Marmorstein family lived exclusively

in the extreme heights and the extreme depths of this beehive of a house. The family life and the tailoring were carried on in the attics; the hides and bones were stored in the cellars, or in spaces that best answered to the description of cellars. It was in one of these stony, low-vaulted storehouses that we found Berisch Marmorstein, busied in the midst of his extremely uninviting and unsavoury wares.

It was a ghastly den of a place. In the failing light the cowhides hanging on the walls wet with ooze, and the bones piled in heaps on the irregular floor, might have been taken for the trophies in some murderer's cavern. Out of every corner there bulged dark, indefinite shapes; stiff claws caught at your sleeve as you passed; the empty sockets of dead eyes stared at you, and black things grinned at you with white teeth from out of every shadow. A dead

cat and a whole litter of kittens, evidently freshly strangled, lay huddled together in one corner—probably the latest acquisition, for young cats' fur can be turned to many uses. A feeble shaft of light which fell on them from the high-set window seemed to bring back an uncanny touch of life; you listened to hear them purr, just as you watched to see the hides that dangled at your elbow descend from the wall and put their feet to the ground. The air of the place struck chill upon one's breath; it was full of ghosts, even though only the ghosts of oxen and of dogs. Though Ortenegg might be as deeply in love with Salome as ever Paris was with Helen, or Paul with Virginie, it must have been a painful moment to him; indeed, I could see that he was suffering, but he bore himself remarkably well, and appeared supremely ignorant of the cowhides and of the dead cats. Berisch

listened with evident surprise to the request for a private interview. I am bound to say that this old Hebrew, in his well-worn satin kaftan, was a striking and even an imposing figure. He was tall, broad-shouldered, and still perfectly erect. In his youth he must have had great physical power; about his wrists and his throat, where the flesh was visibly shrunk, the muscles stood out tough and wiry under the skin. He had a wonderful white beard, a massive forehead, and a pair of very vivid black eyes, which just now were watching my comrade with a mixture of curiosity and suspicion.

"The Herr Lieutenant has something to say?" he began, suggestively.

"Yes," said Ortenegg, "it is this." And he made his statement, very briefly, very clearly, perhaps just a trifle fiercely.

It was probably the most surprising moment in Berisch Marmorstein's life. He

gave a sort of cry and put up his hand to his head so suddenly that he unsettled his *jamaika*, the black skull-cap which the orthodox Hebrew always wears beneath his hat so as to avoid uncovering completely before a Christian.

“Salome?” he muttered; “my daughter? Make her your wife? Does the Pan Lieutenant know what he is saying?”

Ortenegg repeated his statement. The old Jew’s black eyes fastened themselves more suspiciously on his face.

“Excuse me,” he said, after a minute of stupefied silence, “the Pan Lieutenant looks disturbed—ill. Perhaps this is some mistake. A glass of wine in hot weather will sometimes——”

“I am not ill, and I am not drunk,” broke in Ortenegg. “You have not answered me yet. I am waiting for your answer.”

Berisch Marmorstein took hold of the edge of a packing-case which stood beside him, and which was filled with sorted goose and duck-feathers, and leant heavily against it. He did not seem able yet to give the answer required.

"If you have any doubts as to my being in a position to maintain a wife——" began Ortenegg, looking extremely haughty.

"I have no doubts," said the old Jew, quickly, and an eager look came over his face, while his black eyes seemed to get even blacker and more vivid. "You are a rich man—a very rich man." He let go the edge of the packing-case and sighed regretfully, then turned quite calmly to Ortenegg. "It cannot be," he said; "you are not of one faith."

"We shall be of one faith," answered Ortenegg, "for your daughter has consented to adopt mine."

"Yours?" said Berisch, very rapidly; "why, you are a Christian?"

"Yes, and Salome will be a Christian before she becomes my wife. She has promised it to me."

"That is not true," said Berisch, and his face turned hideously and lividly pale.

"It is true; ask her. I have never said what is not true."

"A Christian!" cried Berisch, with sudden passion. "My daughter a Christian? She has promised? Do you know what you are saying? Is it because my hairs are white that you mock me? My daughter shall never be a Christian; before that day comes I will see her lying stiff in her shroud."

His fury was so sudden as to be almost appalling; his black eyes gleamed, his white beard quivered, and his shrunk forefinger pointed shaking to the ground at his feet,

as though Salome were already lying there in her shroud. But, in the midst of it, he recovered himself with a self-control which I could not help admiring.

"There is a mistake," he said, rather huskily, drawing himself up. "Yes, I will do as you say. I will ask her; I will send for her. You will see that you are mistaken."

He walked steadily to the door, and said something in Hebrew to some person who was passing through the outer store-house at that moment.

"*Keine Zeit, keine Zeit,*" was the rapid answer, as this extremely hurried individual was heard to dart away through the outer door.

"Lämmle Blauweiss," Berisch called after him, but all that was heard was the bang of a door and the mumble dying away in the distance of "*Keine Zeit.*"

Some other passer-by was despatched for Salome, and then Berisch came back and waited, and we waited with him. In the silence I could hear that the old man was breathing fast, but he held himself erect and immovable. Despite the setting in which he stood, or perhaps because of it, his figure appeared to my somewhat excited imagination to have suddenly assumed a sort of fantastical majesty, as though he were the sorcerer who would need but to raise his hand in order to break the death-spell of those black shapes all round, and to give back flesh and blood to those gleaming white bones which littered the floor and crept up to his very feet. Certainly it is not given to many men to look majestic in the midst of cowhides and old bones.

No further word was spoken until a step came slowly towards the door, a hand was heard to fumble uncertainly at the latch,

and Salome entered. I had never looked at her so critically as I did now, while she advanced up the long, vault-like space, and while I believed I saw before me the future Countess of Ortenegg. Of one thing I felt instinctively convinced—she was independent of her surroundings. She could be lifted out of them, as it were. All the sordid littlenesses of her low-born life would drop from her like a cloak, without leaving even their memory to drag her down from the new sphere in which she was to be placed; without, so to speak, so much as a single hair of a single one of those murdered cats clinging to the new robes in which she was to be clothed. This conviction of mine must have resulted partly from the recognition that a character so feminine and so flexible as hers must possess an abnormal power of assimilation, partly from my perception of that peculiar lustre, that touch of

race, which so often distinguishes the Jewish maiden, and which, as I have indicated before, precludes, even in the lowest and most uneducated, all taint of what we generally term vulgarity. If it had not been for this gloss of an undeveloped refinement as impossible to describe as it is to deny, it would have remained unimaginable that Ortenegg, madman though he was, should propose to make this bone-dealer's daughter his wife. At sight of Ortenegg Salome started violently. It was almost dark now, and the old Jew was no more than a black silhouette against the fading light, for he had placed himself with his back to the window so that it was quite impossible for me to divine his expression. But Salome seemed to divine it somehow; as she looked at her father her eyes dilated with a sort of wild terror, and her loosely clasped hands strained themselves painfully together.

"You have sent for me, Väterle," she said, just audibly. She seemed to me to be half-sick with some sudden fright.

"Yes, my daughter," said Berisch, in a very measured tone, as though he were still struggling with his passion, "I have sent for you. Look at that man. You know him?"

Salome turned her eyes very slowly towards Ortenegg.

"I know him," she whispered.

"Is it true that in order to become this man's wife you are willing to turn Christian?" His voice was neither loud nor threatening, but there was a certain concise and emphatic precision about it which possibly conveyed to Salome's ears more than it did to ours. She stood helplessly before him, clasping and unclasping her shaking hands. Her wide-open eyes were

fixed full on his face, but she did not speak. Something seemed to have numbed her.

"Is it true?" asked Berisch again. "Did you ever say such words, or is it some mistake? Speak, Salome."

"Speak, Salome," said Ortenegg too, coming a step towards her. She did not look at him, she looked at her father. What could there be so terrible in the old Jew's face? The girl had turned as colourless as wax up to the very roots of her hair.

"I—I——," she faltered, hoarsely; "I did not mean——" and she stopped and looked wildly around her.

"What did you not mean, Salome?" asked Ortenegg.

"Will the Herr Lieutenant graciously allow me to speak to her myself?" said Berisch, more quickly. "When she has answered my question the Herr Lieutenant

will be free to put to her any questions he chooses." He turned to his daughter again.

"Speak immediately, Salome. Are you prepared to give up the faith of your people for this man, this Christian?"

There was about half a minute's silence, so complete that we could hear the parchment-like crackle of one of the hides in the outer store-house as someone brushed against it. Then Salome said something so indistinctly that neither Ortenegg nor I could hear it. Berisch bent forward for a moment towards her, then straightened himself and looked round at us.

"She says she is not prepared to do this," he announced.

Ortenegg started forward.

"Salome!" he cried, "you did not say that?" A convulsive disturbance passed

over Salome's face, but it was gone in a moment.

"Repeat what you said louder, that the Herr Lieutenant may hear you," said Berisch; and he laid his hand very softly, yet very suggestively, it struck me, upon his daughter's shoulder. "You said you were not prepared to abandon your faith; say it again."

"I am not prepared to abandon my faith," said Salome, this time without any hesitation, but in a perfectly dull and senseless voice.

"The Herr Lieutenant's supposition was therefore a mistake," said Berisch, his hand still on his daughter's shoulder.

"A mistake," she echoed in the same way.

Berisch removed his hand, and turned with a certain smooth dignity to Ortenegg.

"The Herr Lieutenant has heard for

himself. The proposition which the Herr Lieutenant has made of taking my daughter in marriage does me much honour, but I am forced to decline it. Does the Herr Lieutenant desire to ask any more questions?" And the Jewish bone-dealer, who had just refused a countess's coronet for his daughter, inclined himself very profoundly.

"No, I have no question to ask," said Ortenegg. "I did not think—I mean, is this the way out? Good-evening. Zultowski, are you coming?"

In the outer cellar we stumbled straight upon Surchen. If her vicinity to the door had not made it evident that she had been at the keyhole, her first words would have cleared up all doubt.

"Why did you do it that way?" she burst out in an angry whisper; "you should not have done it that way. You have spoiled it all. Don't you know Salome yet?"

She was trembling with excitement, and her pretty child's face was distorted with anger, contempt, and disappointment all at once.

Ortenegg, without appearing to notice her, walked straight on.

"You should have done it quite differently," said Surchen, following us to the door. "Why did you not ask me? I would have told you how to do it. I would have told you how long ago, only that I never believed that you would be so—so stupid as to marry Salome."

Am
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It was obvious that Ortenegg's offer to her sister had surprised Surchen for once into being almost honest. She must have been suffering acutely. Salome married to a man with whole thousands of silver florins, what a *Geschäft* it would have been, to be sure, engendering what an infinite possibility of countless other *Geschäfte*! To have been

so near this ideal and to see it shattered, to a master-mind like Surchen's can have been little short of agony.

The moon was just rising as we got on to the *Platz*. Ortenegg struck out straight across it, and I followed. I had a vague idea that I had better keep beside him. He said nothing, but what I could see of his side-face in the moonlight was not reassuring. He held his head rather higher than usual, and his nostrils twitched. His expression was more that of wounded pride than of wounded love. Later on he would suffer, no doubt, but at present he did not look so much heart-broken as haughtily amazed. He had always appeared to me to be singularly indifferent to his own personal and worldly advantages, but in all his mental struggles of the past week, when he was debating desperately as to whether he should or should not openly proclaim him-

self Salome's suitor, I do not suppose that it ever once occurred to him that he might possibly proclaim himself so in vain. I am not sure that this possibility would have occurred even to me, supposing that I had had time to weigh things in my mind. As it is, I had found myself hurried in so headlong a fashion into the matter that all I was conscious of now was an unspeakable feeling of relief at finding myself out of it again—on any terms. In one sense I could have kicked old Berisch, in another I could have blessed him. But I locked my secret exultation—which after all was the predominating sentiment—into my inner self, and kept beside Ortenegg as mum as a mouse. A proud man fresh from a peculiarly galling humiliation is painful to look at and difficult to handle. We crossed the *Platz* in silence, we walked the length of a couple of straggly streets still in silence. Beyond the straggly

streets there was a piece of open building-ground with some heaps of bricks about it and a path which cut across it to the high road. Ortenegg followed this. As we emerged on the deserted road I made my first observation. I remarked that this was not the way to the barracks.

"I am not going to the barracks to-night," said Ortenegg; "you can go if you like."

I understood that this was a dismissal, but I ignored it.

"Ortenegg," I began, after another minute, "do you remember my telling you that I believed Salome had no moral backbone?"

"Oh, be still, in God's name," said Ortenegg, and strode on as before. I saw that I had made a mistake; it was more than he could bear. In front of us the road was quite empty and quite white under the

moonlight. The dust looked like powdered snow. Ortenegg suddenly turned his head over his shoulder.

"What is that?" he said, irritably. "Can one never be alone? There is someone following."

We both stopped and looked back. I too had heard a step, muffled by the thick dust but yet audible enough because of everything else being so quiet. But as we stopped it stopped also. We could see nothing moving on the road, only something seemed to rustle in the black shadow of one of the wayside bushes.

"I don't see anyone," I said, and Ortenegg walked on. After a very few paces he stood still again and faced right round this time.

"There *is* someone following," he said. "Who is there?" and he stood still, waiting.

There was a pause, and then, from out

of the shadow of a bush close at hand, a dark figure came a step forward, then threw a shuddering glance back at the road, then made another step. I knew that figure in an instant. She stood still a few paces from Ortenegg.

"I have come," she said, hoarsely, "for your pardon."

Ortenegg moved a little aside.

"You do not love me, Salome," he said, sorrowfully, yet proudly.

All at once she flung out her arms and fell on her knees in the dust.

"Not that, not that!" she cried. "Anything but that. I have deserved much, but you are strong. Be merciful as you are strong, be merciful and strike me if you will, only do not say that I love you not."

At her sudden movement Ortenegg started, then stood like a statue.

"And yet you denied me, Salome," he said, with his face averted.

The woman on the ground had broken into wild weeping.

"I am a coward," she sobbed, "and you are brave, and therefore it is that you cannot have pity on cowards. Oh, it is unhappy, it is unhappy to be a woman! Our brothers are right when they thank God in the Synagogue for having let them be born men. I am a coward, but I love you. I have no strength, I cannot fight, but I love you. You are my God; the sun does not shine when you are not there, but I love you—I love you!"

She was dragging herself on her knees towards him, with her hands outstretched. Ortenegg bent slowly forward and raised the beautiful girl in his arms, and they stood there in silence right in the middle of the road, full in the white glare of the moon-

light, which made the place as light as day. Salome's breath came in gasps. She was trembling visibly, while her face lay hidden on his breast.

The conviction came over me that I was an absolutely superfluous personage, and walking a few steps away, I prepared to admire the moonlit view. My face was turned towards the town, and I began to wonder whether I had not better slink quietly back in that direction. While I debated thus I noticed that the piece of open building-ground over which we had passed, and which had then been absolutely lifeless, was occupied now by several black figures which stood together in a group in the centre of the space. Other black figures were coming towards them slowly from the direction of the town, threading their way carefully between the scattered brick heaps. By their kaftans I could see that all these

figures were Jews. I remembered that this was one of the earliest days of the month, and I knew, therefore, that this assembly was for the celebration of some fantastical ceremonies in honour of what they call "the Feast of the New Month." On these occasions an open space and a moonlight night is always selected. With a slight feeling of apprehension I looked back at Ortenegg and Salome. They stood in full view of the Jews on the building-ground, and another keener glance at the black shadows among the brick heaps convinced me that the Jews were watching. Their faces were turned our way, and instead of ranging themselves in order and gabbling away at the moon, as I had so frequently seen them do, they stood together in knots and appeared to be consulting. I suddenly changed my mind about going back to the town without Ortenegg. I hesitated for a

New Month

minute longer, and then decided to warn him. As I walked back towards him, Salome, still resting against his arm but with her head raised, was speaking loud enough for me to hear.

"It was so sudden," she was saying piteously; "you did not tell me that you would come. Of course you do not know, but I never dreamt that you would speak to Västerle, I thought you would do it differently."

"Differently?" answered Ortenegg; "how could I have done it differently? It never even occurred to me that any other plan was possible. And now, when I go again to your father, it will not be so sudden, you know."

She shivered and hid her eyes.

"Not to Västerle. You must never go to Västerle again. You do not know, oh! you do not know! If Västerle knew that I had

followed you out to-night, I should never see your face again."

"Ortenegg," I said, touching him on the arm, "I think I had better tell you that there are people about."

Salome turned instantly and stared breathlessly along the road. As her eyes reached the building-ground and the group of black figures upon it, I saw them grow large with fear. She quickly freed herself from Ortenegg's arm, and darting across the road disappeared among the bushes. Ortenegg stood for a little space, threw a searching glance towards the black figures, and then started quickly to walk back to the town. As soon as it became apparent to the Jews that we were coming straight in their direction the knots of excited talkers began to break up; there seemed to be a moment of uncertainty, and then they ranged themselves for prayer, and be-

Jews /
fore we had reached the spot where the path branched on to the high road their nasal voices were making night most peculiarly hideous.

When we were a few paces from the entrance to the path I said to Ortenegg—

“Are you particularly anxious to take the short-cut?”

“The short-cut?” he said, surprised; “why, what do you mean?”

“Only that we haven’t even got a stick between us, and those Jews are watching us. There are about thirty of them, and they’re not in a good temper.”

Ortenegg looked keenly towards the praying Jews. They stood in a straggly circle right across the path, their faces turned to the moon and their arms stretched towards it. Their voices had risen to a nasal shriek. From time to time some individual gathered himself together and leapt in the

air with all his strength. But all the time I knew that the corners of their eyes were upon us, and that they were aware of our every movement.

Ortenegg made no answer to my remark, but turned without hesitation into the path. I thought I saw a flutter among the votaries of the moon, their voices seemed to fall a little. I could see sidelong threatening glances and evil scowls. I had to walk fast to keep up with Ortenegg. He never looked to see whether I was following or not, but went right through the middle of the group, which fell back, doubtfully, on each side of him. The nasal prayer had died away into muttering and then into silence. We had been clear of them for some twenty yards when I heard a whizz in the air, and before I had time to turn a broken brick hit me sharply on the arm.

“That was meant for me,” said Ortenegg,

as, with gleaming eyes, he faced round towards the Jews. "They must be taught to aim at their mark." He made two steps forward, but the prayer-meeting had already dispersed, and the black figures were scuttling away with rat-like speed among the brick-heaps.

CHAPTER VI.

WE were getting near to the time of our annual Autumn Manœuvres, which were to take place not at Goratyn but in the neighbourhood of Marnopol, a large village which lay out on the plains in a convenient position for cavalry exercises. Thither we had received orders to march on the tenth of August, and join our forces to those of the ——th dragoons who already lay encamped at Marnopol, and who represented the other half of our brigade. Preparations for the march kept us all so busy that Ortenegg and I but rarely met, and when we did meet I observed that my friend had returned to his uncommunicative mood. Once only he said to me abruptly: "I can count

on you, Zultowski, can I not? If there were a difficulty, a danger, you would stand by me?"

My heart misgave me, but what else could I say but that I would stand by him? And Ortenegg simply answered, "Thank you, I knew it," and, having wrung my hand to the point of torture, left me without further explanation. But the explanation was not long in following. It came on the very eve of our march. We were to start at daybreak; all the preparations were complete, and it was late in the afternoon before I found myself at liberty. Heaving a sigh of relief, I lit a cigarette and sallied forth across the barrack-yard with my face towards the town, for I thought that a game of billiards and a cup of coffee would be a very pleasant change from counting boots and overhauling horse-blankets. I was in good spirits; I was glad we were

to march to-morrow. Not that I felt any enthusiasm at the idyllic prospect of being quartered for a fortnight in a peasant's hut, but to have Ortenegg away from Goratyn just at this moment would relieve my mind very considerably. In the small postern door I ran straight across the subject of my thoughts. "Ah!" he said, "I was looking for you." And, without any apology, he took me by the arm and led me back across the yard and then along the stone-flagged passage to my rooms.

There was nothing more said until the door closed behind us. At the moment when I ran against him my heart had begun to sink, and at every step across the yard it had sunk lower, until, at a rough calculation, it must have been somewhere about the heels of my boots. A dogged resignation settled down upon me. I half guessed what he was going to tell me.

Sinking down into a very indifferently stuffed arm-chair, the most luxurious seat in my apartment, I tossed my cigarette out of the window and closed my eyes.

"Well, begin," I said in a sepulchral tone.

Instead of beginning at once, Ortenegg walked back to the door, opened it again and looked carefully up and down the long passage. Then he closed it and took a look round the room.

"These old walls are thick," he remarked; "I suppose there is no danger of being overheard?"

"Ortenegg!" I said in surprise, "this is not like you."

He shrugged his shoulders with a touch of impatience.

"No," he said, "it is not like me, and what I am going to tell you now is not like me either. It is not my way of doing

things, but there is no help for it." Then he came close up to where I was.

"Zultowski," he said, "you have not forgotten that you promised to stand by me if there was a difficulty or a danger? I have come to claim your promise now."

And then he unfolded to me his plans, which were sufficiently startling. Salome had agreed to leave her father's house in secret, and to take refuge with the Franciscan nuns whose convent stood on the hill a good many miles from Goratyn, but only a few miles from Marnopol, and who were to instruct her in Christianity and keep her with them until the time of her baptism. This very evening had been chosen for the flight, and every detail had been settled. The girl, being now closely guarded by her father, was to make her escape in men's clothes, and a hired carriage would be in waiting for her near the Jewish burial-place

outside the town. Ortenegg himself, on horseback, was to follow the carriage to the convent gates for fear of pursuit. When he paused I sat dumb for some minutes. There was a clearness and precision about the plan which crushed my last hopes.

"I don't quite see why you have come to me," I observed; "the *rôles* seem all distributed without my help; or do you wish me to ride on the other side of the carriage?"

"No; on the contrary, I wish you not to leave the barracks to-night on any account. They will very likely be attacked. The moment that Salome is missed I shall be suspected, and there will then be either a pursuit or, more likely, a rush at the barrack gates. It was for this that I came to warn you. I want you to go round yourself after dark and try the gates with your own hand, and assure yourself with your own eyes

that the sentries are awake. There is no one else whom I could warn without risking premature betrayal."

"And the nuns agree to all this?" I asked.

"Perfectly; they are only too glad to welcome a convert."

"And the law? Have you thought that the law might possibly interfere?"

"The law, if it interferes, will do so in my favour, since it is of her own free-will that Salome wishes to become a Christian."

I reflected for a moment. Yes, that was true enough; the law would take the convert daughter's part, not the Hebrew father's. There was no hope there either.

"I suppose you are right there," I said with a sigh, "but have you thought of the degree and disagreeables of the sensation this will make?"

"Yes, I have thought of it," he answered,

frowning. "Understand, Zultowski, that this plan is none of my making; it is Salome who wishes it so. That child, her sister, is in the plot, and it is she who has managed almost everything." (He might have spared himself this explanation; the touch of Surchen's genius had been visible to me from the first unfolding of the plan.) "I would have gone to her father again, but the mere hint of my doing so seems to terrify Salome beyond expression. I don't know what she is afraid of, nor how they have managed to cow her among them. Her terror is not to be reasoned against. I have to choose between giving her up, leaving her to become again what she was before I knew her, or stealing her in the dark from her father's house."

He sat down on the top of my trunk, which stood there ready for the start next morning.

"It is hateful," he said, resting his chin on his hand and staring at the floor, "but it has got to be done. I cannot let her go back into the dark again, just as the light is beginning to fill her eyes. All last night in my dreams I seemed to have hold of her hand, and to be dragging her forward through a black passage towards the sunshine that shone beyond, and she struggled to come with me, but something invisible held her back. I fought all night with that invisible thing, and I dragged her nearer and nearer to the light, but I awoke before we reached it."

He sat up and pushed back the hair from his forehead.

"That dream has somehow depressed me, Zultowski; I hope all will go well to-night."

"I hope so," I said dismally. "And after

she is baptized you really mean, you still intend to marry her?"

"Yes, undoubtedly."

I took a long look at my handsome comrade.

"Will your father ever forgive you?"

He turned his head away.

"Ah, Zultowski, that is the hardest part of it all. My father will suffer much; he is terribly proud. Yet I will not despair of his pardon, though it may come late. I have thrown myself on his mercy."

"Are the estates entailed?"

"Ortenegg itself is, but most of the estates came to us from side-branches, and my father can leave them to whom he chooses."

"So that you risk losing them?"

"Yes," he said shortly; "so that I risk losing them."

"There is another thing," I said, after a

minute's hesitation. "Have you realised that you will have to resign your commission? As Salome's husband your position as an Austrian officer would be a pure impossibility."

He flushed painfully. "No," he said, "I had not realised that. I hope you are mistaken; but if it is as you say, I shall resign my commission."

"You are giving up a great deal," I burst out.

"I am giving up a great deal. I know it," he answered with a certain violence. "We have spoken of this before."

"I suppose," I began feebly, "that nothing I could say——"

"No, nothing you could say could make any difference, and I could not listen to it either, for time is beginning to press."

For many minutes after he had left me

I sat half-stunned in my chair. It was not till the room began to get gloomy with evening shadows that I roused myself to visit the sentries and to examine the gates. When I regained my room I found one of my comrades, Lieutenant Brodinski, installed in my arm-chair and turning a cigarette between his fingers. He had dropped in for a chat and a smoke, he explained, being too much exhausted by the preparations for the march to attempt an expedition to town. For want of a decent pretext to turn him out I resigned myself to his society, but the chat was a very one-sided affair. While he talked I stood at the window, straining my eyes towards the town, where lights were beginning to burn. It was eight o'clock, and eight was the hour which had been fixed for Salome's flight. It had been a stifling day, and sunset had brought no refreshment. Lieu-

tenant Brodinski chattered on until the clock struck nine. A faint hope now stirred within me—perhaps the plan had failed.

“What keeps you at that window?” asked my comrade. “You don’t seem to be listening. What are you looking out at? Is there anyone coming?”

“No, there is no one coming, thank Heaven!” I said, turning from the window with a sigh of relief. I had scarcely said it when I suddenly turned back again and leant out, for exactly at that moment the first distant hint of a murmuring sound fell upon my ear. I could distinguish that a cloud, or rather a sort of wall of white dust, was advancing along the road. It could not be the wind, for there was not breath enough stirring to flutter a grass-blade. The murmur I heard came from that advancing wall.

“It looks almost as though it were

alive," said Lieutenant Brodinski, who was now standing beside me. Slowly the murmur swelled to a roar, and out of the cloud of dust broke hundreds of frantic, black figures, running, leaping, jostling each other in their race for the barrack-gates. Then I knew that Ortenegg's plan had not failed, and that he was at that moment bearing Salome away from Goratyn.

"Are they drunk, or is it a religious ceremony, or a joke, or what?" asked Brodinski, staring in stupefaction at the advancing mob. "What are they going to do?"

"Burst in the gates if they can," I replied, "and smash their skulls against them if they can't; don't you see that we are going to be attacked?"

"Attacked! Nonsense, why they are Jews!"

“Yes, but they are desperate Jews. There!” for just then the first blows fell upon the gates.

There was no real danger, of course, either for the barracks or for those inside the barracks, for the mob of Jews was unarmed; and yet those uncanny black figures, swarming like a sort of gigantic ants in the old moat round the castle, those glimpses of rolling eyes, of flashing teeth, and of claw-like hands, revealed by some stray shaft of light and disappearing again in the darkness, were an ugly sight to look down upon. The whole crowd seemed possessed by one identical paroxysm of fury; this sudden burst of rebellion turned their natural cowardice for the moment into foolhardiness. They groaned and yelled and kicked the gates with their slippered feet, and threw themselves against the walls in senseless rage, mounting on each other's

shoulders in order to clutch helplessly at the smooth granite surface which gave no point of support. Some of them tore their fur caps from their heads and hurled them at the windows, while high above all the din rung Salome's name, roared, yelled, and hissed at us in every tone that rage could strike. "Salome! Salome Marmorstein! Give her back! Open the gates and let her out!"

"Salome Marmorstein!" exclaimed Brodinski, looking at me; then with a sudden connection of thought, "Where is Ortenegg?" I was just going to inquire testily what on earth Ortenegg had to do with the matter, when the door was opened by Rittmeister Lebra, the captain in command of the barracks. "Is Ortenegg here?" he asked, in a great flurry. Evidently the connection of ideas was universal. "He is not in his rooms, and he is the only person who

can explain. No one else knows anything; they have all lost their heads. Do you know where he is?"

It was evident that the captain also had lost his head; he was breathless and bewildered—the occurrence was too utterly unprecedented. No one had ever heard of barracks being attacked by Jews. Doors were being banged in all directions, men were rushing aimlessly along the passages, knocking against each other, and asking each other in bewildered voices what it was all about.

"He is not here," I answered; "but I can give you this much explanation. Those Jews believe Salome Marmorstein to be concealed in the barracks." The noise outside was so great that I had to shout at the captain in order to be heard above it.

"And are you sure she is not in the barracks?" the captain shouted back again.

"Quite sure."

"But how do you know?"

"I can't tell you how I know, but I give you my word of honour that neither Ortenegg or the girl are in the barracks at this moment."

"But that only makes matters worse!" cried the perplexed captain, who had only been in Galicia a short time, and to whom those frantic Jews outside probably appeared more formidable than they did to a native.

"What ought I to do?"

"Send out a detachment to tell them in plain words that Salome Marmorstein is not in the barracks, and to order them to retire. Announce that in case of their refusal the squadron will make use of its arms."

"It would be most disagreeable to me if the matter were to end with bloodshed," said Captain Lebra.

"Make your mind quite easy," I replied. "I know the stuff we have to work on. There is no question of bloodshed. The lances don't need to strike, they only need to shine; that will amply suffice."

And it did suffice. It is true that the detachment failed in its mission, for both the announcement and the threat were received by yells of derision, but the inevitable end was near; all this tragic rage could not fail to come to an almost comically commonplace collapse. The alarm signal had meanwhile been given, and the squadron was standing mounted in the yard. Once more the Jews were called upon to retire, but another yell was the response. Then the gates were flung back, and instantly a lull fell upon the storm. It is one thing to be threatened with "the application of arms," and it is quite another thing to be suddenly confronted by row upon row of

lances that glitter uncannily in the semi-darkness; to hear the stamp and almost to feel the breath of impatient horses, and to know that the whole of this many-headed monster is waiting for one single word in order to dash forward. There is nothing so cooling as the glitter of cold steel when displayed at the right moment, and in the eyes of even an enraged Hebrew it has a peculiarly evil aspect. On this occasion it had the effect that a wet towel has on a drunken man. The foremost row of the besiegers first stood rooted, then recoiled, pressing upon those behind them, then turned their faces in a panic which instantly spread to the outermost circle. The intoxication of fury seemed to die away as though by magic. Ten minutes after the gates were opened the whole attacking force was slinking back along the road, exhausted and sobered.

This part of the plan, therefore, had come off exactly according to the programme. It was not till next day that I learnt from Ortenegg that the second half of the plot had been carried out with equal smoothness, and that Salome was safely ensconced under the protection of the Franciscan nuns. In the whole history of elopements no elopement had ever been more successful than this. It had only one fault, namely, that it was just a trifle *too* successful. I soon began to perceive that the victory had been too easily gained for a man of Ortenegg's contradictory disposition thoroughly to enjoy it. If there had been a pursuit of the carriage which bore Salome away, and he had been driven to put himself, sword in hand, between her and her pursuers, or if the convent gates had been stormed as had been the barrack gates, then Ortenegg would have had no leisure for either doubt or

scruples. But not only were the convent gates not stormed, but the next few days made it apparent that the brief siege of the barracks had been the one rebellious flare-up, followed by a complete and almost suspiciously sudden surrender. True, we were not at Goratyn, but there was no necessity for being at Goratyn in order to judge of the spirit of the Goratyn Jews. This was quite sufficiently vouched for by the behaviour of their co-religionists at Mar-nopol. No body of Russian Nihilists and no band of Italian Carbonari have ever possessed or ever will possess such a perfectly organised system of intercommunication as exists among the Orthodox Polish Jews. It is the inevitable result of their fanatical *esprit de corps*. The Jew never falls out of touch of the Jew; the grievance of one is the grievance of all. An insult or a danger threatening one member of the

Orthodox body is enough to make them rise like one man—if rising, that is to say, be agreed to be the best proceeding. They are quite as ready to go down like one man—on to their knees, be it understood—and to creep towards their object upon their hands and feet. Directed by some invisible guidance, obeying orders that are issued no one but a Jew knows by whom, and conveyed no one but a Jew knows how, the most distant communities will act with an identity of impulse which might well awake the wonder of the most dangerous species of conspirators that ever held midnight meetings. It was therefore quite sufficient to watch the Hebrew barometer at Marnopol in order to know what the weather was like at Goratyn. What puzzled me most was that I could see no symptoms of thunderclouds brewing. That Ortenegg was an object of general attention among the Hebrew

population was evident. When he rode through the streets at the head of his troop one Jew would nudge another and point him out, but there was nothing threatening in the glances which followed him. That ugly scowl which a month ago had met him at every turn was now changed into a sort of humbly sorrowful gaze. Every single Jew in Marnopol with whom he came in contact seemed anxious by his behaviour to express that he had suffered at Ortenegg's hands a great personal wrong, which had gone near to breaking his heart, but which he was a great deal too crushed to resent. The Jewish landlord of the inn where we took our meals inclined himself more profoundly before Ortenegg than before any of his other guests, but there never failed to be the fragment of a groan accompanying the "*Guten Tag*" with which he greeted him. The Jewish shop-lad who handed him his

cigars across the counter sighed regularly as he did so, and lifted his eyes to his customer with a look as abjectly reproachful as though he would say, "What have you done, oh, what have you done to us poor creatures!" Altogether the Orthodox Jew comported himself at this juncture very like a dog that has been soundly beaten, and that, far too broken-spirited to bite, lies cringing before the master whose stick has made him smart.

"What they are aiming at," I often said to myself in these days, "is not quite clear to me, but it is evident that they have been given their clue and are acting up to it."

Meanwhile, the lower the inclinations of the landlord became and the more abject the gaze of every pair of Hebrew eyes that turned his way, the more thoroughly uncomfortable did Ortenegg obviously feel. He found himself forced into a sort of

publicity on which he had not counted; exalted into the position of an oppressor of the people by the people themselves, who indeed seemed bent on making a show of their oppression. Rachel mourning for the loss of her children seemed to be the keynote of the situation, and though the lamentations were pitched in the most submissive of undertones, yet the burden of the song could not fail to become somewhat irksome to the ears of him for whom it was intended. Added to all this there were the well-meant but irritating jokes of his comrades to be borne, for the affair had naturally caused a sensation, and was commented upon in different tones. Ortenegg was laughingly congratulated upon his successful *coup de main*; he was nicknamed the "Prince of the Arabian Nights," the "Champion of the Fair Unbaptized," &c. &c. Every word was sacrilege to him, and yet it was but another

unavoidable consequence of his victory. He began to be ashamed of having conquered with such ease.

“If only it were possible to bring about some sort of a reconciliation, some sort of an understanding with her relations,” he said to me one day, at the end of our first week at Marnopol, “I should not feel then as if I had stolen her. I have always intended settling a yearly sum on Berisch from the day I married his daughter; I wonder how it would be if I began overtures on that basis?” A minute later he added abruptly, “And he has been ill, too, I hear.”

“Old Berisch? Who told you so?” I asked.

“A Jew who brought me a horse for sale this morning. He was at Goratyn yesterday, and he says that Berisch Marmorstein has had a sort of stroke. He is an

old man, you know, Zultowski; I don't want to feel that I am a murderer as well as a thief."

Next morning Ortenegg came to me with a piece of paper in his hand; it was a mere rag of paper, and on it was written in childish but very clear characters:

"Don't let her go.—SURCHEN."

"I found it on my table when we got back from exercising," said Ortenegg. "What can she mean?"

That same afternoon showed what she meant.

CHAPTER VII.

TOWARDS evening Ortenegg, according to his daily habit, rode over to the convent, and I accompanied him at his request. He was bent on showing me Salome in the new setting in which she shone, as he assured me, with such enhanced brightness. The road we had to follow was a rough country-road, usually deserted, but enlivened to-day by solitary figures and small groups, trudging patiently along through the dust. The odd thing was that they were all Jews, and that their faces were all turned the same way that ours were, that is, towards the convent. From by-paths and side-lanes they came, singly and by twos and threes.

They could be seen from afar off wending their way across the stubble-fields, and all falling into the same track. As we distanced them one by one a humble greeting was murmured and a glance of hound-like submissiveness was cast up towards us, as the dusty wayfarer flattened himself into the hedge in order to leave free our passage.

The nearer we got to our destination the more numerous, as well as the more dusty, did the wayfarers become. As we turned the last corner of the steep road which wound up to the convent gate we came upon a whole group of them. In the middle of the group stood a cart full of straw, whose starved-looking horses were browsing on the grass by the wayside. There must have been about twenty or thirty Jews assembled round this cart, and they had evidently come from far, for not only were their kaftans white with dust,

but many of them were sitting exhausted on the ground. Others leant on their sticks and fanned themselves with their coloured handkerchiefs. Some stood with lowered heads, their gloomy eyes fixed on the ground before them, while some again were gently rocking their bodies to and fro and murmuring some prayer in a monotonous undertone. They were all waiting for something. As we emerged round the corner of the road it immediately became obvious that it was for us they had been waiting. The monotonous prayer died away and the group fell back on both sides to let us pass. Glancing from side to side I seemed to see some familiar faces. Was not that Benjamin Silberstein, the Goratyn grocer? Surely those women were the same two old Jewesses whom I had seen in the Marmorstein lodging—Rebecca Kazles and Esther Enteres? Did that marvellously hooked

nose not belong to Moritz Wurzel, likewise of Goratyn? Was it the dust between this and Goratyn that had stained them so white, and were they come on a pilgrimage or as a deputation?

Ortenegg threw a glance of helpless inquiry towards me, but a shrug was all the answer I could give. In the first instant I had thought that the cart which stood there was laden with nothing but straw, but as we got alongside of it the straw rustled and a white head appeared. An old Jew was lying at full length in the cart—it was Berisch Marmorstein. He dragged himself into a sitting posture and looked piteously at Ortenegg. Ortenegg flushed scarlet. There was not a word said while we dismounted. I took charge of the horses, and leading them round to the yard saw them as properly stabled as circumstances would allow. It was fully ten minutes before I

could return to the convent gate. The greater number of the Jews were still assembled here, but Berisch was no longer in the cart. It was to the convent garden that I was led, which lay in the quadrangle formed by the four wings of the building. An open passage supported by stone columns ran round all four sides of the square. It formed a sort of Way of the Cross, apparently, for representations of Christ's passion were painted on the white-wash of the wall. There were no trees in this enclosed garden, but the building gave as much shade as was required—more in fact than was required, for the hollyhocks and asters and snapdragons that filled the square in choking profusion seemed to want colour a little. A grizzly old watchdog nodded drowsily at me from out of a wooden kennel; some pigeons strutted in the sunshine on the roof.

At one side of the quadrangle there was a group assembled, or rather two groups, which stood a little apart, eyeing each other curiously and mistrustfully—a group of nuns and a group of Jews. Between the two groups stood Ortenegg. A thin elderly nun, with an austere and yet not a disagreeable expression, had come forward some steps upon the gravel. In the background, under the shadow of the covered passage, stood a knot of younger nuns, huddled together somewhat like a troop of startled birds, casting glances of alarm at the strangers and fingering the rosaries at their belts as though they believed themselves in the presence of the evil one himself. Some wooden benches pushed into a sort of half-circle, and littered with pieces of needlework, evidently hastily dropped, stood alongside. An altar-cloth, obviously under repair, had slipped to the ground; a strip of

lace hung from a table; beside it a book lay open upon its face.

A little to one side of the garden-path there grew a clump of yellow hollyhocks, and beside it stood Salome, shrinking so close up against it that the flowers almost touched her hair. She was dressed very precisely and carefully in a plain black dress. Her clasped hands hung down before her; the linen cloth she had been hemming was still held between them, and her thimble glittered upon her finger. As far as her lowered head would let me judge, her face was very pale. The Jews who had penetrated in here were about half a dozen in number. Rebecca Kazles and Esther Enteres were among them. Berisch Marmorstein headed the group, though he seemed scarcely able to stand. He was speaking as I approached. In the glimpse I had had of his face as it peered out of the

straw I had gathered the vague impression that he was altered, but it was only now that I could judge of this distinctly. In this old Jew, with the halting voice, with the trembling hand and the wild disordered white beard, it was scarcely possible to recognise that majestic sorcerer who had faced us with so stately a presence in his cavern of bones but a few weeks ago. He seemed in this short time to have lost his erectness, and with one hand he steadied himself upon the shoulder of his son David, who stood beside him. It was as though the blow had broken him.

“See, I speak quietly, with slow words, with words well weighed,” he was saying as I approached. “Indeed there was anger at first in my soul, there was great anger. It was because of this anger that I let seven days go past, for I wanted to be measured in my speech, to come before you humbly,

quietly, and to speak such words as might find the road to your heart. And in truth it is but a little thing that I ask. Ask? No, it is not even that I ask for it, for do I not know myself in your power? I plead only, I entreat that you may listen to an old man's prayer—his very humble prayer."

"I cannot let her leave the convent," said Ortenegg, sullenly; "she is well cared for here."

"And in her father's house has my daughter ever been otherwise than well cared for?" said Berisch, in that new tone of meekness which was so strange in him. "Have I not always been more a slave than a master to my children? Say, brethren, is it so?"

"It is so," murmured the other Jews.

"The best, the most tender of fathers," cried Esther Enteres, flourishing the handkerchief with which she had been mopping

her damp forehead. "Oh, that my eyes should have lived to see him robbed of his child!"

Ortenegg coloured slightly and bit his lip.

"I never would have robbed you of your child," he said, quickly, "if you had not refused her to me when first I spoke."

"Oh, say you so?" said Berisch, eagerly. "See here," and leaving go his hold upon his son's shoulder he made a step forward. "I deny not that you have much reason, much seeming reason, for your doubts. Yes, it is true, I would have kept her from you if I could. It is true that to hear my daughter abjure the faith of her fathers is to me bitterer than death. I deny it not. I would have crossed your plans if I could, it is true, but I could not. It was in vain that I struggled against you, and it is in

submission that I bow to your will, for you are the conqueror." His head sunk upon his breast, and he seemed to totter for a moment. David sprang to his side and supported him with his arm, the Jews in the background groaned in chorus. But Berisch recovered himself quickly. "My prayer is only this," he said, raising his head again; "let me lead back my child with me, and I will hold her for you in trust until she be your wife."

"You can visit your daughter," said Ortenegg, who was beginning to look troubled. "You can assure yourself with your own eyes that she is happy. Mother Lucilla will give permission"—and he looked towards the elderly nun.

"Rather than that you should yield to his request the permission shall be given," said Mother Lucilla; "but be warned, Count Ortenegg, and do not go further in your

concessions. They are a nation of serpents."

"This is all I can do," said Ortenegg, turning again to Berisch; "are you content?"

"If that be your will, I must content myself. But you, Sir Count?" and for one moment the vivid light came back to his black eyes, the blackness of which grief seemed to have dimmed; "how will *you* be content? Will it content you to hear the whispers that will pass? You are a noble gentleman and I the least of the people; but for this—just for this—can you be content when it is said of you, 'She was refused him; for all his riches and his high birth this low-born girl was denied to him; in darkness and in night he was forced to steal her from her home, to carry her off in secrecy, as though it were a deed of shame.' Oh, Sir Count, better surely that what has to be done should be done openly and unscreened

before the eyes of the world, in the light of day! Better surely that, humble though her father's house be, you should receive your bride freely at its door as a voluntary gift, rather than that you should hold her as you now hold her, by virtue of a successful stratagem."

I had placed myself so that, unobserved, I could study Ortenegg's face. The great moderation of the old Jew's words was evidently making its impression; but it was the last argument which had touched the most vulnerable point. I could see it in an instant by the twitch of Ortenegg's black brows. I remembered how he had said to me on the evening of Salome's flight from her father's house, "It is not my way of doing things—it is hateful—but there is no help for it." I thought of how, but the day before, he had expressed the wish for some sort of understanding being established with

her relations; and I began to perceive the possibility of his yielding to Berisch's request. Together with this perception all sorts of strange thoughts came into my head. I glanced at Salome, wondering whether any of these thoughts were shared by her, but she was standing now with her face averted. She had pulled one of the yellow hollyhock flowers from the clump beside her and was slowly tearing it to pieces. She uttered no word during the discussion, and in her attitude I thought I read something of that senseless fear that had numbed her that day that Berisch had questioned her before us, and she had denied her wish to become Christian.

"Do you mean," said Ortenegg, speaking with some excitement, "do you mean that you withdraw all your former objections—that you freely consent to your daughter's marriage with me?"

"I freely consent," said Berisch, without hesitation.

"And whence comes this rapid change in your sentiments?" asked Mother Lucilla, suspiciously.

"My sentiments, venerable lady, have remained what they were," replied Berisch, straightening himself a little. "It is the circumstances that have changed. When first this gentleman did me the honour to aspire to my daughter's hand she was under my roof and my protection. She has since left both, and has thus proclaimed to the world that he is more to her than all family ties. Her name is in all mouths—coupled with his. Bethink yourself: do you not see that I am helpless—that all I can hope to save is my daughter's fair fame? It is for this that I have conquered myself so far as to plead for the permission to conduct her back under my roof, and thus to silence the

the sh | tongues of the slanderers, who else will ever talk lightly of her flight. Is my prayer granted, noble Count?"

"I must think over it. I cannot give you any answer to-day," said Ortenegg, hastily. "Come back again some other day."

The old man's hands wandered to his temples.

"Some other day!" he repeated. "I am seventy-two years of age. The road is long and weary. With pain and with groans I have dragged myself from my sick bed to traverse it, only to be told at the end that I may come back another day. Come, my son; come, my brethren. There is no mercy for us here."

"Wait a minute," said Ortenegg, as Berisch with a tottering movement half turned to go. "There is no need for us to part in bitterness. I have something else to

say, and it is just as well that I have the opportunity of saying it to-day. Your friends can witness my words;" and Ortenegg then in plain terms stated his intention of settling a yearly sum on Salome's father, dating from the day of his marriage with her. The sum named was one which to a Hebrew bone-dealer meant a fortune, but Berisch showed no excitement.

"It is most gracious of the noble gentleman to provide for old Berisch," he said, in a meek voice. As he raised his eyes for an instant it struck me as strange that there should not be even a passing gleam of satisfaction in them; they were vacant and haggard.

"It is no more than my duty, seeing that you will be the father of my wife," said Ortenegg.

"Aye, to be sure—the father of your wife."

"And," continued Ortenegg, "I further wish you to know that I intend to settle all the fortune I can freely dispose of upon your daughter. She will be well provided for. You need not be afraid to trust your child to me. Salome will be well watched over, well cared for," he urged, almost deprecatingly.

"Aye, aye, well taken care of, well provided for," agreed Berisch.

"She will not only command a very handsome fortune," put in Mother Lucilla, "she will also bear a very high title. You should thank Heaven on your knees for the good fortune that has come to you."

"A very handsome fortune and a very high title," agreed Berisch, with his inscrutable face; "yes, it is so."

Mother Lucilla seemed inclined to dilate on this side of the question, but Ortenegg stopped her by a gesture.

"I wish you to say whether you consider my proposals fair, Berisch Marmorstein?"

"Very fair, noble Count."

"That is well, then. We are no longer antagonists, since you have given your consent to my wish. I am glad of this consent. You know that I was not dependent upon it, but I prefer marrying your daughter with your consent than without it."

"Who will believe in this consent?" said Berisch, quickly raising his head. "Who will believe in it, if you keep her here?" Then, before Ortenegg had time to answer, "Ah, Sir Count!" he cried, and his former emotion rushed back upon him, "it would be but for a few days. Are a few days so long that you would grudge them to a father who is to be cut off from his child for the rest of the years he has to live on the earth?"

"A few days are long enough to instil many doubts into a young mind," said Mother Lucilla, severely.

"May the God above us strike me to dust," cried Berisch, with sudden passion, "if any such thought be in my mind. Him I call to witness. To Him do I appeal. Before His face do I swear that the girl, child of my own though she be, shall be held by me as a loan from you only—not to be meddled or tampered with by any word of mine. If I speak not the truth may I never know rest on my pillow nor peace in my grave; if I deal not honestly by you may the curse of the Almighty pursue me, may my flesh rot from my bones and my dust be cast to the winds, and may my lot fall upon my sons and their descendants for ever!"

"So be it!" echoed the tailor David.

"So be it!" re-echoed the Jews in one

breath, almost in one voice, speaking on one identical impulse. Thus may their forefathers, eighteen centuries ago, have cried, "His blood be upon us and upon our children!"

Ortenegg was shaken. The sudden fire of Berisch's speech had carried him from off the ground on which he had believed himself firmly entrenched. As he uttered his fearful imprecations, his withered hand striking his breast, his eyes transfixed in the far-off gaze of one who is looking on visions, the old Jew's words did indeed carry an irresistible conviction with them. Even Mother Lucilla stood silent. The nuns under the shadow of the cloistered passage had stopped fingering their rosaries by this time, and in the interest of the moment had instinctively drawn a little nearer. The sound of a dismal wail coming from the spot where we had left the waiting

Jews outside floated towards us over the convent walls. With my eyes fixed upon a withered aster at my feet I listened intently for Ortenegg's next words. I knew instinctively that he was looking towards me, that in the emotion and uncertainty of this crisis he was seeking to consult me by a glance. It was not so much a question that that glance would contain—for he was convinced, or all but convinced, by the Jew—rather it was a confirmation that he was asking for, the final seal to put upon his resolve. But not to save my life would I have relinquished my study of the withered aster. Consequences of an immeasurable height and depth might be hanging upon the mere question of whether our eyes did or did not meet at this moment, and I was determined to be no adviser.

And the next thing that happened was that before anyone could foresee the move-

ment the old Jew sank down upon his knees and clutched piteously at Ortenegg's cloak.

"Do not deny me," he moaned. "Let me lead back my child to my house. Do not bring this shame upon my white hairs; do not bring this grief upon my people. Hark! Do you not hear the voices of the brethren that have toiled out with me, joining their lamentations with mine? Even now they are beseeching the Most High to soften your heart. Let me lead back my child. See! I raise towards you those hands which have reared and fed her and worked for her, that fondled her when she was a babe and blessed her as a woman. See! my son, her brother, kneels beside me," for David by this time was likewise on his knees, though he had gone down far more circumspectly and with a much greater regard for his trousers than the old man had displayed.

At her father's movement Salome had started, clasping her hands for an instant over her face. She made a step forward, and her lips moved, but before she had spoken a word Berisch's voice was heard again.

"See!" he cried; "my daughter herself would implore you. I read it in her eyes. Say, my child, will you return to your father's arms?"

Salome looked wildly at her kneeling father, then at Ortenegg, then back again at her father, as though her eyes were moving against her will. She was struggling to speak and yet could not. She made another effort, and then her lips trembled into an uncertain smile.

As Berisch fell on his knees Ortenegg had stepped back with a gesture of mingled consternation and distaste. A man on his

knees is always more or less of a distressing spectacle; when the man is white-haired, and when it is before you that he kneels, no doubt the sight becomes little short of unbearable. His resistance had been at its last gasp already, and now as he saw the two old Jewesses getting out their handkerchiefs, and became aware that the groaning chorus were throwing critical glances at their knees and at the gravel path, his courage gave way. Taking Salome by the hand he led, almost pushed her forward.

“Take her with you,” he said, hoarsely, “and remember what you have sworn.”

“Would it not be wiser, Count Ortenegg,” suggested Mother Lucilla, “if we had some piece of writing to take our stand upon in case of accidents? An agreement might be drawn up and signed——”

“I never do things by halves,” inter-

rupted Ortenegg, impatiently. "If I did not believe that her father was speaking the truth I should not let her go with him. That is enough; no paper is necessary."

A shriek of joy had broken from the Jews, and Esther Enteres and Rebecca Kazles fell into each other's arms. So great was the reaction from depression to exhilaration that I thought it safer to withdraw a little behind the nearest clump of hollyhocks, for fear of coming in for some stray embrace. A messenger had already darted off to carry the news to the waiting assemblage outside, and in the next instant the joyful howl of many voices rose up and rent the air. Berisch had staggered to his feet and stood now with his hands stretched towards his daughter, while his fingers were closing and unclosing nervously, as though he could not await the moment when he should lay his arms around her.

“Go with him, Salome,” said Ortenegg, gently. “In a very few days we shall meet again. In the meantime, farewell!” And then, in the face of us all, and somewhat to the confusion of the fluttering young nuns, he took her in his arms and kissed her on the lips.

“Farewell!” said Salome, almost inaudibly.

In her great brown eyes, as she raised them to his, there shone something that Ortenegg could not read aright, for want of the clue, but which to me looked like despair.

He turned once more to Berisch.

“Take her now, and remember that you hold her for me—in trust. You all are witnesses,” and he looked towards the other Jews.

“We are witnesses!” came back the shrill reply.

“For you—in trust,” repeated the old Jew, and stooping he raised the hem of Ortenegg’s cloak and pressed his lips upon it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE last act of this short drama need not be long in the telling. Ortenegg, delighted to be rid of his *rôle* of oppressor, returned home in an almost triumphant mood.

"Confess that you have been mistaken," he said to me several times that evening; "confess that your opinion of the Jews has hitherto been a false and unjust one. Could anything have been more moderate, more sensible, more conciliating, than old Berisch's words. Where is this deadly hatred, this unforgiving fanaticism of which you have told me so much?"

But I held my tongue and neither confessed nor denied.

Thursday had been the day on which Salome left the convent. It had been settled that Berisch was to keep Ortenegg daily informed of her well-being. The desired message came on Friday, and it was all that a message should be. Ortenegg's mood remained triumphant. On Saturday he was a shade less triumphant. The appointed message did not come from Goratyn, but he attributed this to the *Schabbes*, and was scarcely uneasy. Besides, he was going to ride over himself next day, and would be able to convince himself that Salome was feeling happy and being kindly treated. The thought that her impending baptism might make her the subject of taunts and harsh speeches, not from her tender old father, of course, but from neighbours and acquaintances, disturbed him occasionally.

Sunday came, but with it came also the discovery that Ortenegg had been given

the inspection for the day. This meant that he could not leave the precincts of the military station. Neither did any message come. There was no *Schabbes* to explain this second silence, and though Ortenegg still kept up a show of great confidence, yet a certain restlessness was observable about him.

"She must be ill," he said to me. "Did it not strike you that she looked very pale on Thursday?"

"Yes," I agreed, "she looked very pale."

On Monday the same silence; on Tuesday the same. On both these days we were in the saddle from morning till night, so an expedition to Goratyn was not to be dreamt of. Ortenegg's anxiety—an anxiety which had no precise form and to which he could give no name—began to grow acute. It was a lucky thing, certainly, that his prospects in life were not limited to

the success of his career, for during these two days of sham battles and strategical manœuvrings he committed blunders enough to undermine his military reputation for ever. Lost in day dreams, even the trumpet-signal would fail to rouse him, and in the pre-occupation of his thoughts he would lead his soldiers headlong into the very jaws of a fortunately unbloody death. On Tuesday afternoon he gave five florins to a Jewish factor, and promised him five more if he would go direct to Goratyn and bring him news of Salome. The factor took the five florins and went, but he did not come back, though Ortenegg sat up till midnight awaiting him, and the second five florins remained unclaimed.

“I shall ride over to-morrow, whatever happens,” said Ortenegg. “If it cannot be managed in the day I shall go in the night!”

It was not quite so bad as that, however. A friendly shower of rain which shortened our manœuvring, and a little hurrying over the rest of our business, enabled us to start about the middle of the afternoon; for I accompanied Ortenegg as a matter of course. To reach Goratyn would take us four hours hard riding, and in order to show a little mercy to our horses, who had been considerably overworked of late, we had decided to make a short halt on the way. Accordingly we drew rein in the village of Klotow. There was a shabby little inn here, kept by the unavoidable Jew. As we rode up to the door the landlord was standing on the step talking to another Jew. They both turned their heads at our approach, and, it may have been fancy, but it seemed to me that they both slightly started. The landlord advanced to take our horses.

"Feed them well," said Ortenegg; "they have a long road before them."

"The gentlemen are on their road to Goratyn?" asked the Jew.

"Yes."

Here I looked up just in time to see that the two Jews exchanged a lightning-like glance, but not a word was said. Ortenegg and I entered the inn, and while the horses were being baited we tried to blunt the keenest edge of our hunger with hard-boiled eggs and stale bread, for neither of us had had time for such a secondary matter as dinner. The eggs took a long time to boil; at any rate they were a long time in appearing. While we were disposing of them as expeditiously as was reasonably possible, the landlord stood a little distance off and watched us.

"The gentlemen are in a great hurry to get to Goratyn?" he began presently, with

an insinuating point of interrogation in his voice.

"Yes," said Ortenegg, shortly. "Will you see that the horses are led round? It is time for us to be off again."

"Will the gentlemen not first partake of another plate of eggs?" asked the landlord, without moving.

"Certainly not. You have just heard that we are in a hurry. There is no time to spare. We have to be back in Marnopol to-night, or at any rate before day-break."

"Five o'clock is the hour at which the regiment leaves its quarters, is it not?" asked the landlord, gently, still without moving.

"Yes," said Ortenegg, somewhat surprised. "Will you fetch the horses, please?"

"Immediately, Count Ortenegg, immediately," and he left the room.

Ortenegg stared at me. "How does he know my name? I never set eyes on the man before. And what odds is it to him at what hour we leave the camp?"

"Every Jew always knows everything that he wants to know," was my reply.

We were still sitting at the dirty wooden table, contemplating the empty egg-shells on our plates, when the sound of galloping hoofs was heard, and a riderless horse passed the window. In the same instant the landlord returned. He was wringing his hands.

"Oh, gentlemen!" he whimpered; "oh, noble and gracious gentlemen! However am I to tell you what has happened?"

"You needn't tell us," said Ortenegg, starting up. "One of the horses has run away."

It was Ortenegg's horse that had got

loose, it appeared, and was now cheerfully galloping back towards Marnopol.

"He won't stop till he is at his stable-door," said Ortenegg, grimly. "I am sorry for you, Zultowski, but you will just have to lend me To Ona to ride to Goratyn on, and as to how you are to get back to Marnopol, you will have to shift for yourself."

We had followed the landlord out into the yard where two or three Jews were standing about. An inquiry had been made as to how the horse had broken loose, and a stable-lad, suspected of negligence, had had his ears boxed by the indignant landlord; but the fact remained that Ortenegg and I were a dozen miles from either Marnopol or Goratyn, and that we had one horse between us. Naturally I put To Ona at Ortenegg's disposal. That was plainly my duty, though the rest of my fate might

remain somewhat vague. Orders were given for the mare to be brought out. There was a delay of several minutes, and then, as To Ona was led out of the stables, Ortenegg and I simultaneously uttered an exclamation—the beast was dead-lame.

At this point Ortenegg lost his temper. What he said to the landlord and the stable-boy may have been a satisfaction to his irritated nerves, but the satisfaction was a barren one at best, for the stable-boy simply opened his mouth and looked impenetrably stupid, while the landlord cringed like a dog and wriggled like a worm, and gabbled forth a torrent of self-defence which was deafening but not at all to the point. How could he know how the horse had got lamed? He had not seen the horse from the moment the noble gentlemen had dismounted till this minute. How did it come that the horse had been quite sound half an

hour ago and that now it hobbled like a sick sheep? He didn't know. He couldn't possibly know. Perhaps it had trodden on some sharp stone or on some nail—such things often happened. At any rate he could give no explanation. He was as confounded as could be the noble gentlemen themselves, and so were the bystanding Jews. He was quite innocent—everybody was quite innocent—but the horse was lame.

While he was gabbling on in this strain, and while Ortenegg was raging at everybody in turn, I was doing the only practical thing under the circumstances—examining To Ona's injured foot. There was not a trace of an injury to be seen. The sole of the hoof was perfectly intact, *ergo* she could not have trodden on any sharp point. There was no bruise, no wound; the foot was to all appearances perfectly sound, and yet she

seemed unable even to put it to the ground. The fact was a riddle, but all the same it was a fact, as a few experiments convinced me.

“Is there anything in the shape of a carriage in the place?” asked Ortenegg, when his first anger had spent itself and he had recognised the futility of any further investigation. “If I cannot get to Goratyn on horseback to-day I must get there some other way.”

“We have no carriage at all here,” said the landlord, despondently.

“Absalom Nelken!” exclaimed Ortenegg at that moment, and he stepped up to a Jew who was standing a little apart tying knots in the lash of a long whip. “If you are here there must be a carriage.”

Absalom Nelken was the Jew who hired out carriages at Goratyn. Both Ortenegg and I knew him well by sight.

"I should be most happy to serve you, Herr Lieutenant," answered Absalom, "but my carriage is engaged."

"But my business is urgent. If you can take me only as far as Goratyn I shall find other means of getting back."

"I am sorry, but I cannot take you, Herr Lieutenant; my engagement is strict."

"I will give you twice the usual fare if you take me."

"It is no use."

"I will give you three times the usual fare."

"It is no use, Herr Lieutenant."

"Is there anyone else here who possesses anything that goes upon wheels?" asked Ortenegg, turning to the other Jews; but they silently shook their heads. "I will pay him anything he asks for it," urged Ortenegg, "for I must absolutely reach Goratyn to-night."

But I looked round at the unmoved yet watchful faces around us, and the conviction came over me that Ortenegg would absolutely not reach Goratyn that night—that he was not *meant* to reach it.

It was long before he confessed himself beaten. He spent an hour in tramping round the place in search of a conveyance, but all the conveyances were in the hands of Jews, and, by some curious coincidence, all the Jews had such urgent business on hand that, despite their voluble regrets at not being able to serve the Herr Lieutenant, they positively could not spare their carts. Absalom Nelken alone, being repeatedly pressed, held out what was the nearest approach to a hope. He hurried off to fulfil his former engagement, promising to return for us with fresh horses the moment that he was at liberty. I felt certain that he would not return, but he did. He came back to

fetch us at three in the morning, exactly in time to take us straight back to Marnopol.

Ortenegg and I—who, meanwhile, had tried to kill time by eating two more meals of hard-boiled eggs and stale bread, and had vainly endeavoured to get a little sleep upon the wooden benches of the eating-room—just saved our distance, for the men were mounting as we reached our quarters.

Strictly speaking, there was no time on this day either for the ride to Goratyn, but Ortenegg was not to be stopped any longer by any obstacle short of an impossibility. At the conclusion of the manœuvres he did not dismount, but merely stopped at his quarters to change his *tatarotka* for his cap.

“Are you coming with me?” he asked, somewhat ungraciously, and I said “Yes,” though I had the impression that this time he would almost have preferred being by himself. I don’t exactly know what I expected.

I only know that, though I had not washed my hands for twenty-four hours, and had not been out of my clothes for thirty-six, though I was hoarse with dust and shouting and had a secret hankering after a clean collar, yet I could not have taken it on my conscience to let him go alone. Ortenegg was quite as dusty as I was and considerably hoarser, but he did not seem to be aware that he had not slept.

There was no question to-day of a halt. As we rode through Klotow our landlord of yesterday stood at the door of the inn. This time he did not start at the sight of us, but bowed very respectfully and smiled very suavely as we trotted past. I was riding another horse to-day; To Ona, who had been fetched home in the meantime, was still as completely and as mysteriously lame as yesterday.

During the first half of the ride I

struggled valiantly to keep the conversation afloat, but the nearer we got to Goratyn the more pointless did my remarks become and the flatter did they fall. The ride ended in dead silence. We were still in August, and yet it was an autumn day, for autumn comes early in Poland. Not that it was either dull or cold. On the contrary, the sun was shining brightly and the sky was cloudless, but it was no longer a summer sun, and the blue overhead was no longer the blue of a summer sky. There was a certain crispness in the air and a certain keen clearness about the distant view which were distinctly autumnal. The road by which we approached Goratyn was the same that we had followed coming from Goratyn on the afternoon of that carnival-day when we had met Surchen with her cow-hide in the snow—the same day that Ortenegg had first seen Salome. The beech-woods were

still in full leaf, but patches of red and yellow had broken out here and there. The wild cherry-trees that grew between the stones in the "house of the living"—as the Jews have a curious fancy for calling their burying-grounds—were beginning to strew their leaves upon the graves, and round the stone cross which stood at the head of the hill the swallows were wheeling and twittering, busy with travelling plans, no doubt.

We descended the steep hill into the town. As we crossed the market-place I could not help being aware that we were being a good deal observed, perhaps because the regiment was known to be at Marnopol, or perhaps only because we were so marvellously unwashed. It was by the Jews exclusively that we were observed. Scarcely had we emerged upon the *Platz* than every shop-door appeared to become

filled by the figure of its proprietor. We were looked at curiously, furtively, inquiringly, and almost a little fearfully. Ortenegg seemed aware of it. During the whole of the ride he had been silent with the gloomy silence of a man who is weighed down by some presentiment of evil. The tobacconist, Moritz Wurzel, was standing on his door-step. Ortenegg bought all his cigars from him, and had never passed the door before without being obsequiously grinned at; but to-day Moritz Wurzel, on discovering that Ortenegg was glancing in his direction, seemed to be overcome by some unaccountable embarrassment. Instead of grinning he coughed, and then became deeply interested in something upon the sleeve of his kaftan. A few steps further on the ample form of Rebecca Kazles bulged out of the shadow of the hotel gateway. She was watching us round the angle of

the wall, but as we approached she drew back and bustled away into the yard behind.

Ortenegg looked at me.

"Zultowski," he said, in a whisper, "something has happened."

It was the first confession of his secret fears, and he seemed to have spoken almost against his will.

Yes, something had happened. There was no tangible proof of it, only a floating suggestion, too subtle to be defined. Wild ideas of mysterious disappearances, of deep dungeons, of poison, of strangulation, arose in my mind. An uncomfortable sensation took possession of me. Was it remorse? Had I committed a murder in that moment when I avoided meeting Ortenegg's eyes this day last week in the convent garden? Poison? Ah, no! they had not been merci-

ful enough for that, as the history of that afternoon will soon prove.

At the door of that bee-hive building which I had entered twice before we dismounted. There was no one in the outer store-house. It seemed to me, in the first instant, that there was no one in the inner one either. A slight movement of one of the hides on the wall I took to be caused by the draught, but Ortenegg's senses were more on the alert than mine. Just as I was going to pass on he made two rapid steps forward, and, from out of a dark corner, dragged David Marmorstein, by the collar of his kaftan, into the light of day. His suspense had taken refuge in passion.

"What are you hiding for?" he burst out. "What are you all hiding for? What is the matter? What have you done? Where is Salome?"

"Not here," gasped David Marmorstein, shaking in Ortenegg's grasp.

"Where is she, then?"

"I—I don't know. She is not here."

Ortenegg, with his bloodshot eyes, his eyelids reddened by the glare of the sun and the want of sleep, his dust-choked voice and shaggy moustache, was certainly a somewhat startling apparition. The sight seemed to have robbed David of all moral as well as physical courage.

"Wretch!" said Ortenegg, "you *do* know. Speak the truth. Is she ill?"

"No, she is not ill."

"Is she—dead?"

"No."

"Where is she, then?"

"Not here," whimpered David, wriggling to free himself. "The noble gentleman had better go upstairs; Surchen is there—Surchen will tell him."

Ortenegg stared for a minute longer at the terrified David; then, with a gesture of infinite contempt, released the kaftan collar and turned upon his heel.

He mounted the first few steps of the staircase very quickly; then his pace relaxed. The nearer we got to the attic door the more did his steps drag. A sort of heavy reluctance had taken the place of his passion of a minute ago.

"Herein!" said a shrill voice as he knocked at the door. Opening it we found ourselves face to face with Surchen, the only occupant of the room. Surchen did not shrink at sight of us as David had shrunk; she stared at us steadily across the square wooden table at which she was sitting.

The tailor's bobbins and pincushions had been pushed to one side, and before Surchen there lay upon the boards of the table a

luminous heap of something that shone like gold, only that there was a touch of red in the yellow. What could it be? Some new sort of silken thread, perhaps, that was to be wound upon the bobbins. It was as soft and as bright as silk, and it flowed over the edge of the table and waved gently in the current of air which the opening of the door had brought with it. When we got close to the table I saw what it was. It was neither gold nor silk, but it was human hair—a woman's red-gold hair—fallen very lately beneath the scissors, for it still had upon it all the gloss of life. Half of it lay in a tangled mass; the other half had been put in order, and was now being plaited up by Surchen's nimble fingers.

“Where is Salome?” I asked, as Ortenegg did not speak. He seemed unable to do so. With wide-open eyes he stood staring at that coil of hair on the table, as though it

had been some glittering golden snake that was about to rise and strike him.

"You have come too late," said Surchen, sullenly, and she looked towards Ortenegg. "Just twenty-four hours too late. It serves you right. Did I not send word to you that you should not let her go? *Gott und die Welt!* And two *Sechzers* to pay for the messenger! And how Väterle found out that I had sent the note I do not know. And if it were not that they had kept me locked up so tight all these days——"

"Whose hair is that?" asked Ortenegg, abruptly, pointing to the heap upon the table. There was a look of panic upon his face.

"That is——" began Surchen, and then she stopped and glanced up at Ortenegg with a wicked glance in her eyes.

"That," she said, very deliberately, "is Frau Blauweiss's hair."

"Who is Frau Blauweiss?"

"The wife of Lämmle Blauweiss."

"You are not speaking the truth," said Ortenegg. "I know that hair. It is Salome's."

Surchen, who had resumed the plaiting of the hair, merely gave an impudent shrug of her shoulders.

"Can you deny it?" asked Ortenegg.

"Deny what?"

"That that hair you are plaiting up is the hair of your sister, Salome Marmorstein?"

"You are quite mistaken," said Surchen, with her nose in the air. "This is not Salome Marmorstein's hair."

The scared look on Ortenegg's face turned to bewilderment. He walked a little nearer to the table.

"I am not mistaken," he said; "that is your sister's hair?"

"Did I ever say it was not my sister's hair?"

"Yes, you did; you declared that it was Frau Blauweiss's hair."

"And so it is the hair of Frau Blauweiss."

Surchen tittered with enjoyment. To torture Ortenegg seemed to afford her a kittenish satisfaction.

"Will you explain, please, what this means?" he said; and though his voice was not loud, Surchen looked into his face, and evidently came to the conclusion that it would not be safe to carry the torture further.

"It means," she said, returning to her sulks, "that there is no more Salome Marmorstein, only a Salome Blauweiss. They are the same person."

"The same person?" repeated Ortenegg, stupidly.

"Yes, Frau Blauweiss is Salome. She was married yesterday to Lämmle Blauweiss."

I looked at my comrade apprehensively. There was still that same stupid wonder upon his face—no keen surprise—no start of astonishment. Did he not understand, or did he not believe?

"Did you say—*married?*?" he asked at last, slowly.

"Married yesterday in the Synagogue, before the Rabbi."

"I don't believe you," said Ortenegg, very quietly. "It is a trick. You are trying to hide her from me. Perhaps she is even in the next room. Salome!" he called out, raising his voice and then holding his breath to listen. But there was no movement and no reply. He strode past the table and opened the two other doors of the room. One of them opened into a smaller attic

room, the other into a store-closet, littered with miscellaneous articles. Surchen made no attempt to prevent him.

"You will find a great many broken chairs in there," she remarked, "and a few chipped tea-cups, but you won't find Salome."

Ortenegg shut the doors again and returned to the table.

"What made you say that about Lämmle Blauweiss?" he began. "You must have had some reason. Was it to frighten me?"

"To frighten you?" repeated Surchen, scornfully. "And what profit would your fright be to me, pray? I don't see what *Geschäft* I would make in frightening you. You asked a question and I answered it; that is all."

"But that cannot be all. What you tell me is not possible."

Instead of answering at once Surchen

laid down the plait of hair, and, turning up the edge of her jacket-bodice, unfastened a slip of paper which was pinned on to the hem.

"You have seen Salome's writing before, have you not?"

"Yes."

"Is this paper written by her?"

Ortenegg took the paper in his hand and looked at it.

"Yes," he said again.

"Read it. It is for you. I was to give it to you. Perhaps that will make you believe."

There was a silence of several minutes. Ortenegg stood so still that the paper did not even rustle in his hand. There were only three lines to read, but it took him a long time. When he had finished his expression was quite changed. He looked up with dazed eyes.

"Where is your father?" he asked. "I should like to speak to him."

"Väterle has gone to Romozany to buy skins. He will not be home till to-morrow."

"But he was at home yesterday, and he allowed this thing to happen?"

"He didn't *allow* it to happen, he *made* it happen. Salome knelt down before him and asked him to kill her rather than give her to Lämmle Blauweiss, but Väterle only shook his kaftan in order to shake off her hands, and when he walked to the door she was dragged after him because she would not let go, and she fell over on her face and made her forehead bleed."

"Then your father doesn't believe in God?" said Ortenegg, still looking down at the paper in his hand.

"Oh, yes, he believes in God—a great deal," answered Surchen, with a pretty shrug. "Why did you think he didn't?"

“Because if he believed in God he must know that he has called Him falsely to witness. How can he ever pray to Him again?”

Surchen burst out laughing.

“Never pray to Him again! Why, I never heard Väterle pray more devoutly than yesterday. He spoke such a beautiful blessing over Salome before she went to the Synagogue that I was the only person in the room who hadn’t tears in my eyes.”

“But he swore to me by his soul’s salvation that he would hold her for me in trust.”

“And you believed him?” was Surchen’s curt commentary.

“But his tears, his oaths, his prayers?”

Surchen looked at him with an air of pitying superiority.

“It is no wonder that we make such *Geschäfte* among the Christians,” she ob-

served at last, "when it needs but such a thinly-limed twig to make a bird sit fast."

"Then do you mean that it was all a comedy?"

"It doesn't matter what you call it now."

"And you say his name is Lämmle Blauweiss?" asked Ortenegg in the same mechanical tone, while his eyes followed the movement of Surchen's fingers among the hair with a sort of dreamy fascination.

"Yes."

"Who is Lämmle Blauweiss?"

"One of our neighbours in this house," Surchen explained. "He deals in old clothes chiefly, but he does not mind if other old things come in his way, such as furniture or books or old ironwork, or in fact anything. Väterle says that he has a great talent for business, and he never loses a minute of time."

"Yes, I remember now," said Ortenegg.

"I saw him once—in this room." He looked slowly round the room, then returned to watching Surchen's fingers.

He spoke so quietly that I felt frightened out of my wits. It would have been infinitely more reassuring to see him break down outright. There was that in his eyes and in the set of his features which made me almost fear for his reason.

"And this morning," chattered on Surchen, "they went off to his people for a fortnight, to be out of the way, as Väterle said—Lämmle Blauweiss and Salome."

"Lämmle Blauweiss and Salome!" Ortenegg broke into a helpless laugh, as though the juxtaposition of the two names struck him only in the light of a ghastly joke. "And this man, this Lämmle Blauweiss, is as strict a Jew as your father?"

"*Gott und die Welt!* That he is! Quite one of the Orthodox, or Väterle would

never have chosen him for Salome; though, to be sure, when a husband has to be chosen in such a hurry, one has to take what there is, and Lämmle Blauweiss was nearest at hand."

Ortenegg did not seem to be listening any longer. He had taken up some of the the hair upon the table and was looking at it narrowly, feeling it critically between his fingers, as though to make sure of what it was. He shuddered, and for an instant shut his eyes, then laid it slowly down again and turned to me.

"Had we not better be going back now, Zultowski? I think there is nothing more to be done here."

But Surchen had caught the glimmer of an opportunity that was not to be lost. Bowed though she was for the moment by the one great failure, her spirit was much too elastic to be broken. At this moment,

when she saw the man on whom such hopes had been built about to pass out of the room and at the same time out of her circle of vision for ever, Surchen's business instincts rose triumphantly to the surface. It was not in her nature to cry permanently over spilt milk, however rich in quality it might be or spilt out of however large a jug. Because one big *Geschäft* had failed that was no reason for neglecting more modest opportunities. Her glance had followed Ortenegg's movement as he laid down the strand of hair. As he lifted the latch of the door there was a hand upon his arm.

"Take it with you, Herr Lieutenant," she said. "You would like to take it with you, would you not? Väterle need not know. How much will you give me for it?" and, her face all alight with this inspiration, an eager sparkle in her brilliant brown

eyes, an insinuating smile upon her soft, red lips, Surchen held towards him the tress of Salome's hair, not forgetting either to hold it so that the light should play most becomingly along its golden threads.

Ortenegg looked at her vacantly and passed out.

"Herr Lieutenant, name your own price, Herr Lieutenant!" was called after us in accents of heartrending entreaty.

I kept close to Ortenegg all the way down the staircase. He did not speak until we were crossing the yard.

"So that is over," he said at last. His voice was still quite calm, but he seemed to pronounce the words with difficulty.

"Perhaps it is not true," I feebly suggested, quite against my own conviction.

Ortenegg was still holding the piece of paper which Surchen had given him

crumpled up in his hand. He held it out towards me.

"It *is* true," he said. "I feel that it is true. Read that."

There was no beginning to the scrawled note, and there was no signature beyond "S." It ran as follows.

"Surchen will tell you that I could not help myself. I am not worthy of you. I am a coward. Forgive me if I have spoilt your life. I hope I shall not live very long."

"I saw the man once," Ortenegg mused aloud. "He had an old skirt in one hand and a birdcage in the other; and when they asked him to hold a candle he said '*Keine Zeit*,' and hurried out. They said that he never had any time. Why," and he almost managed to smile, "he will never have time even to look at her, Zultowski."

I could not answer. I was praying in-

wardly that his self-control might give way, for I knew that the later the breakdown came the worse it would be.

“But it was good acting,” said Ortenegg, standing still in the middle of the street, his bloodshot eyes fixed in a wide-open stare on the paving-stones at his feet. “It was very good acting. What a fool I have been! ‘In trust,’ he said, and I believed him. I believed him, when I should have believed my dream. She has gone back into the dark, Zultowski. She has gone back into the dark—for ever.”

He broke off suddenly and staggered against my arm. Before I could support him he was lying insensible upon the pavement.

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Three weeks later Ortenegg was convalescent. He had gone through an acute nervous fever. The inquiries I had made in

the meantime resulted, as I never doubted they would, in a complete confirmation of Surchen's statement. Lämmle Blauweiss and Salome Marmorstein were legally married. Whether Berisch Marmorstein had in any way brought himself within reach of the law by his broken promise I do not know. Possibly Ortenegg might have had grounds for a legal complaint. Of course none was made. What would have been the good? Salome Blauweiss could never again become Salome Marmorstein. Berisch knew very well what he was doing. I had not seen Salome again, and I have not come across her since; but, occasionally, during sleepless nights, when my fancy is unpleasantly active, I am tormented by the question as to whether Frau Blauweiss wears a thread or a satin wig in place of her auburn hair. As to Herr Blauweiss I have never, to my knowledge, set eyes upon him. I know him

only as the invisible and hurried individual whom Berisch Marmorstein apostrophised from out of the storehouse door on the day of his refusal of Ortenegg's suit. I think of him exclusively as the incarnation of the only two words which I ever heard from his unseen lips, "*Keine Zeit!*"

I must not forget to mention that one day during the first week of Ortenegg's illness one of my stable-men, while rubbing down To Ona, discovered the cause of her lameness. A horsehair had been tied tightly round her leg, just above the fetlock, and the hair carefully combed over it. The strain had been sufficient to paralyse the muscles. The discovery was a mere matter of chance.

After he had regained his senses Ortenegg never pronounced Salome's name. Once only he touched upon what had passed.

"Zultowski," he said to me, one evening,

as he sat in the arm-chair beside the stove, for the evenings were cool already, "I have been puzzling my head and I cannot come to any conclusion. Is it that Berisch Marmorstein is a very bad man, or is it only that he is a very good Jew?"

"He is Orthodox," I answered. "That is the only key I can give you to the puzzle. Do you remember our talk last winter, and what I told you?"

"About the weapons they use? The poisoned arrows? Yes, I remember." He was silent for a little. Presently he said, "I have been struck by one of these arrows. I wonder," he added, dreamily, "I wonder, Zultowski, whether the wound will ever heal?"

If ever it did heal it was in the shadow of the monastery that healing came, for that wounded heart is now covered by a monk's habit. As soon as his strength was suffi-

ciently restored Ortenegg went home on leave. I never saw him again. Three months later he resigned his commission, and before a year had passed I got the news that Rudolph von Ortenegg, the last of his name, had entered upon his novitiate in the Dominican monastery which stands in the shades of that same vast pine-forest where stands the castle of his forefathers.

THE END.

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